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DIVINE REVELATION ;

ITS EVIDENCES,

EXTERNAL, INTERNAL, AND COLLATERAL.



LONDON :

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.

# DIVINE REVELATION;

ITS EVIDENCES,

EXTERNAL, INTERNAL, AND COLLATERAL.

TOGETHER WITH

ITS CANONICAL AUTHORITY AND PLENARY  
INSPIRATION.

BY

DANIEL DEWAR, D.D. LL.D.

PRINCIPAL OF MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY, ABERDEEN,  
ETC. ETC.

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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THE design of this Work being to furnish a Text-book, on the Evidences of Divine Revelation, to students in the literary and philosophical classes in this University, it has been composed by the Author with a special view to this important object. He felt it necessary to combine comprehensiveness with brevity; to give a complete view of the evidences of the truth and divine authority of the Old Testament and the New, in as narrow a compass as is consistent with the elucidation of the numerous topics to which reference must necessarily be made in such a work.

The most effectual, indeed the only effectual, method of conducting the studies of young men who have not yet completed the *curriculum* of arts, in the Evidences of Divine Revelation, is, to combine regular examination on a text-book with such additional and familiar illustrations as the teacher may deem it necessary to give. By devoting a very moderate portion of time weekly to this exercise, during the currency of two sessions, considerable knowledge may be acquired in this important branch of a Christian and liberal education.

I would also suggest to parents the propriety, and the great advantage, of devoting a portion of time

weekly,—perhaps on the evening of the Sabbath—to the instruction of their children in the evidences of the truth and divine authority of Christianity. Is it not an error in the general system of education in this country that, while the truths of the Christian religion are taught with commendable diligence, the reasons why those truths should be believed are so seldom taught? Though we should not rest satisfied with the mere knowledge of the *grounds* of our faith, it is, on every account, proper that we should be so well acquainted with these grounds as to be able to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.

As to the propriety and importance of giving instructions in the evidences of Christianity to the students attending the literary and philosophical classes in the Universities, there are few, it is presumed, who entertain any doubt. No man can be liberally educated who is unacquainted with this important branch of knowledge. Irrespectively of the divine authority, the grounds on which Christianity claims to be a miraculous interposition of the Deity form a class of phenomena of which no man should be ignorant, and ignorance of which in any person who professes a knowledge of letters and of science is disreputable.

MARISCHAL COLLEGE.

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# THE EVIDENCES OF DIVINE REVELATION.

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## BOOK I.

### THE PROBABILITY, DESIRABLENESS, AND NECESSITY OF DIVINE REVELATION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### INTRODUCTION—THE HIGH IMPORTANCE OF THE INQUIRY AS TO THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF DIVINE REVELATION.

THE inquiry into the truth and divine origin of Christianity, is one in which we cannot feel indifferent, if that were possible; and if possible, it is not desirable. From the constitution of our nature, as rational creatures, and the hopes and fears which all occasionally experience, we are led to take a deep interest in the question. Is the Bible a revelation from God, or is it not? It is true, many able and learned men have laboured, during the last sixteen hundred years, to establish the negative in regard to this question, but their work is yet only in its commencement. Notwithstanding the learning, talent, and ingenuity which they have brought to the task, the evidences of the divine authority of the Bible remain unimpaired; and that book holds the position to which it originally laid claim, as an authoritative communication from Heaven. In that sacred character it has been regarded and acknowledged by the wisest, the greatest, and the best of mankind; and after a full investigation of the evidences on which it rests, they have added their testimony to its truth and divine authority. It is our duty, however, not to take a matter of such great importance upon trust, but to weigh and examine for ourselves. All that I request is, that we pursue this inquiry with the candour and even solemnity of mind which are due to its infinite importance. Its infinite importance appears,

1. From the nature of the question on which we are to decide. The message professes to be from God, and to relate to my well-being through eternity. If, indeed, it be from my Sovereign Ruler and Judge, it concerns me deeply not to reject it, not to treat it with indifference, but to give it the reception to which it is entitled. It offers evidences of its heavenly origin, external and internal, varied and numerous ; and it requires me to examine these under the feeling of responsibility to God, before deciding on its claims. It were easy to form a judgment if there were in the message anything palpably false or immoral, or if the credentials of the messenger were deficient and inadequate ; but the contrary is the case, so much so, that they are the most appropriate which a messenger from Heaven could produce. He, therefore, who, in these circumstances, decides against the divine authority of the Bible, decides—if that book be indeed from the Supreme Governor and Judge of the universe—against argument, and duty, and God, and takes upon himself a tremendous responsibility.

2. The importance of the inquiry in which we are engaged further appears, from the nature and contents of that communication which professes to come from God. These, it is true, may produce a strong bias in its favour ; but they may, and I fear in some unhappy instances do, give rise to a bias of an opposite description. Is the love of the truth the only affection that influences the human mind in relation to this subject ? Are there not some persons who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil ? Is the man who yields to passion and appetite, who lives for time, not for eternity ; for earth, not for heaven ; in the mere pursuit and enjoyment of animal gratification, and not as an intelligent and immortal being, likely to have his partialities secured in favour of a book which declares that the God with whom he has to do is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,—that the Saviour whom it proclaims requires his followers to renounce the practice of sin and ungodliness, and to follow him in the exercise of virtue and self-denial,—and that the day of final retribution, which it reveals, will decide the everlasting destiny of the righteous and the wicked ? Still, the discoveries of the Bible are in their nature fitted to affect the heart, and to secure a judgment favourable to the divine authority of the book which contains them. They are so, not only because

they relate to themes of unequalled grandeur and sublimity, but because they give that knowledge which is most needed by mankind—the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent—the knowledge of the way in which man may obtain favour and acceptance with his Maker—and of the life and immortality beyond the grave.

3. This inquiry demands that it should be prosecuted with a spirit corresponding to its nature and importance. It is almost superfluous to say, that a question, on the right decision of which interests of incalculable moment depend, should be studied in the spirit of humility and seriousness. The communication, be it always remembered, professes to come from God ; and it therefore may contain matter offensive to our pride, to our earthly-mindedness, to our love of self-indulgence. But this circumstance, as it does not in the least weaken its claims to our reverential regard, so neither should it hinder us from cherishing that lowly and candid temper of mind, which is the most favourable to the discovery and the reception of truth. It was the remark of a great man, that “the mystery of an incarnate and crucified Saviour must necessarily confound the reason, and shock the prejudices, of a mind which will admit nothing that it cannot perfectly reduce to the principles of philosophy. The whole tenor of the life of Christ, the objects he pursued, and the profound humiliation he exhibited, must convict of madness and folly the favourite pursuits of mankind. The virtues usually practised in society, and the models of excellence most admired there, are so remote from that holiness which is enjoined in the New Testament, that it is impossible for a taste which is formed on the one to perceive the charms of the other. The happiness which it proposes, in a union with God, and a participation in the image of Christ, is so far from being congenial to the inclinations of worldly men, that it can scarcely be mentioned without exciting their ridicule and scorn. General speculations on the Deity have much to amuse the mind, and to gratify that appetite for the wonderful, which thoughtful and speculative men are delighted to indulge. Religion, viewed in this light, appears more in the form of an exercise to the understanding, than a law to the heart. Here the soul expatiates at large, without feeling itself controlled or alarmed. But when evangelical truths are presented, they bring God so near, if we may be allowed the expression, and speak with so commanding



a voice to the conscience, that they leave no alternative but that of submissive acquiescence or proud revolt.”\*

Hence the peculiar difficulties which are to be encountered in examining the claims of Christianity ; difficulties which are to be overcome only by cherishing an humble and teachable, and may I not add, prayerful frame of mind? A question in physical science may be investigated as an intellectual exercise, without any disturbing force to unfit the mind for its deliberations ; but it is far otherwise in regard to the question of the divine origin of the religion of the Bible. Here the feelings are engaged as well as the intellect, the heart as well as the understanding ; and if, in the course of the investigation, the dispositions which are natural to man are allowed to have the ascendancy, and to overpower the judgment, then the result will be a partial verdict ; given, not according to evidence, but to inclination. In order to escape that unhappy result, it is necessary to subdue the dispositions which lead to it. Unless this is done with honesty of purpose and determination to know the truth, we may have eyes, but see not. What avails it that the claims of the Scriptures are sustained by a mass of evidence—that they are supported by history—confirmed by prophecy—strongly enforced and recommended by their own divine purity—strengthened and rendered irresistibly powerful by an harmonious combination of proofs, various and affecting,—if we are incapable of perceiving, through the influence of prejudice, passion, and the inveterate love of sin? While the disposition continues opposed to the reception of divine truth, is not the individual who cherishes it interested in resisting the evidence which proves that truth to be divine? “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” This honest disposition of mind is indispensable to the successful prosecution of this inquiry, in consequence—

4. Of the obligations which the admission of the truth of Christianity involves. On the supposition that the sufficiency of the evidences of the divine origin of the Scriptures is acknowledged, there remains no alternative, even for the man of science and accomplishment, but to sit at the feet of Jesus, in the attitude of a lowly disciple, to receive truth on the testimony of God in that revelation of his will which is accessible to the peasant as to the philosopher. According to the inductive philosophy, such a person would feel himself bound to

\* Robert Hall.

receive those truths which have been ascertained by observation and experiment, without regard to mere conjectural hypothesis. But if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, and is in every way more entitled to our unlimited confidence. We violate the rule of sound philosophy, if, in place of humbly receiving all the truth which the divine testimony sets forth, we speculate and dogmatize on its nature, receive it partially, and resist the spirit and design of the whole. If, by our examination of the evidences of the truth of the Bible, we are led to a firm belief in its divine authority, let us abide by the result of our inquiry, just as we should feel bound to abide by the results to which the principles of philosophical investigation might lead us ; and as, in the one case, we should receive facts, and the truths resulting from them, on the testimony of competent observers ; so, in the other, let us receive, on the testimony of God, all the doctrines which he has been pleased graciously to reveal ; and which, because they are fitted, as they are intended, to make man wise unto salvation, are worthy of all acceptance. Honesty of intention, and docility of disposition, are as necessary at the termination of an examination of the evidences of Christianity, as at its commencement, and during its progress. Having arrived at a conviction of the divine origin of the Scriptures, we are laid under the most sacred obligation to receive them as the only rule of faith, the supreme standard of duty, and the only source of future hope. The man who, from pride of understanding, or depravity of heart, trifles with or rejects the evidence of divine revelation, is, on the supposition of its being truly divine, guilty of "making God a liar ;" but he who believes in the conclusiveness of this evidence, and yet disputes the doctrines or injunctions which this evidence proves to be from God, is chargeable with far greater inconsistency, and obnoxious to severer condemnation.

5. I shall now make a few observations on the advantages arising from an intimate acquaintance with the evidences of divine revelation. These indeed must be obvious to every one who has any knowledge of the subject. It is so necessary to have an understanding enlightened on one branch of the evidences, that I know not how a man can be a Christian at all who is ignorant in regard to it,—I refer to the internal evidence, or rather that view of the internal evidence which relates to the admirable adaptation of the gospel to the nature and circum-

stances of man. Can he be a Christian at all who has not learned the correspondence between the representations of the Bible of the state of man as a subject of the divine government, and as a sinner in the sight of his Maker, and his actual condition as guilty and miserable in consequence of sin? And who can lay claim to the character of a disciple of Jesus, who knows not from personal experience that the chief discovery of the gospel, that which brings to view and harmonizes the attributes of God in the salvation of man, is the rich provision of redeeming mercy, through the atonement of the Son of God? The strength of the external argument may force a man to cease from being an infidel, without making him a true believer; but no one can rightly understand that branch of the internal evidence to which I am now alluding, without some knowledge of the infinite importance and suitableness of the grand fundamental doctrine of Divine revelation,—“That God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses.”

6. (I.) An acquaintance with the evidences is necessary as a branch of liberal education. It is so in a double point of view: First, regarded merely as a subject with respect to which every well-educated man ought to have some knowledge. This is only claiming for Christianity the same place in a liberal course of study which has so long been assigned to the mythology of Greece and Rome. It is nothing more than demanding of all who pass through such a course, that while they are required to know something of the fables of antiquity, they should also have some acquaintance with the grounds and evidences of what claims to be not only truth, but truth bearing the impress of God's character, and the sanction of his authority. Apart altogether from the consideration of its divine origin, revealed religion presents in the evidences on which it rests its claims a series of phenomena the most extraordinary in the history of the human race—phenomena which neither the philosopher nor historian can overlook—and of which to be almost ignorant is discreditable to any man who has enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education.

7. The second view of it, regarded as an element in such education, is as a means of intellectual improvement. Viewed in this light, I know not an exercise better fitted to invigorate the understanding than a careful examination of the Christian evidences. It cannot fail, when judiciously conducted, to lead

the attention of youth, at the time when their mental powers are developing, to the different kinds of testimony and evidence, while, at the same time, it will strengthen their power of discriminating imposture from truth, and their habits of correct thinking, correct reasoning, and sound philosophical investigation. It would, in fact, operate on the mental constitution as a course of practical logic : it would do more, it would tend to form the habit of regarding truth with reverence, of submission to its authority, and hatred to all misrepresentation and levity on sacred things. And it would be impossible to promote this acquaintance with the evidences of revelation without extending the range of their general knowledge. An uninformed or ignorant person is not capable of estimating the full strength of the Christian cause. It supposes an acquaintance with many subjects if its full amount is to be ascertained. History, criticism, science, and experience in argument, all furnish their aid in this important inquiry, and contribute their respective quotas to confirm or elucidate the claims of the Word of God. Even an acquaintance with the opposition it has encountered, and over which it has triumphed, tends powerfully to confirm the mind in its truth and divinity.\* It is no disparagement to the talents of the most successful student of physical or moral science to say, that his mind may be improved by reading the *Analogy of Butler*, and the *Defence of Miracles* by Campbell.

8. (II.) An acquaintance with the evidences of divine revelation is productive of great moral advantages : and this view of it gives it the highest recommendation to our consideration. While it affords intellectual gratification and improvement, its professed and main object is to restore and renovate human nature. The study of Christian evidence attains its moral ends by leading us to an attentive consideration of the Scriptures—by inducing us carefully to study the records of divine truth, that we may ascertain whether the inherent marks of heavenly origin be such as may warrant us to believe that they have been given by the inspiration of God. Is it possible for any one to do so without being the better for it? Who can survey the Scripture account of the divine character,—the holiness, justice, and goodness of the law,—the helpless and wretched condition of the sinner,—the excellence, efficacy, and appropriateness of the gospel remedy,—the peace and felicity

\* Orme's *Lecture on the Advantages, &c.* p. 22.



of the Christian,—the vanity and momentary duration of all that is earthly,—and the dignity and glory of the heavenly state,—without being improved by the exercise? I cannot conceive how any one can seriously examine the Scriptures, to learn their perfect consistency in all that they declare on any specific subject,—as, the depravity of human nature—or, the connexion between sin and suffering—or, the Deity of Christ—or, the grace which was manifested in his condescension and humiliation—or, the necessity and sufficiency of his atonement—or, his power to save—or, the blessedness of obedience to him,—without receiving from the study some salutary impression.

9. Even the external evidences cannot be studied aright without an attentive study of the Scriptures. How can the great subject of prophecy, and more especially that branch of it which relates to the Messiah, be examined without a careful comparison of the Old Testament with the New? In this investigation the student is led to notice the spirit of prophecy in the first promise, announcing the advent of the Redeemer,—afterwards intimating the time when he should appear,—declaring at a period still later that he should descend from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David,—that he should be born of a virgin,—that a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah should be his forerunner, and prepare his way,—that he should begin to publish the gospel in Galilee,—that numerous and mighty miracles should be wrought by him in the course of his ministry,—that his birth-place should be Bethlehem Ephratah,—that he should be poor, despised, and rejected,—that he should be betrayed by one of his own disciples for thirty pieces of silver,—that he should be mocked, derided, and crucified,—that vinegar and gall should be offered him on the cross,—that his garments should be divided, and lots cast for his vesture,—that not a bone of him should be broken,—and that while he should die with malefactors, he should be honourably interred. These and many other predictions directly relating to the Messiah, contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the fulfilment of which is recorded in the New, afford striking proofs not only of the divine origin of the Bible, but of the wisdom of God in providing against the possibility of an impostor assuming and sustaining the character of the promised Redeemer. Can this series of prophecies be surveyed in the proper spirit in connexion with



their fulfilment, and the Sacred Writings in which both are to be found examined with candour and seriousness, without receiving the moral and salutary impression which this manifestation of the divine wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness is calculated to produce?

10. An influence not less salutary may be derived from a survey of the miracles of Scripture generally, but more especially those of Christ, viewed in relation to the benevolent designs for which they were wrought. They were indeed displays of power—of the mighty power of God; but they were also manifestations of compassion and kindness, and harmonized with the gracious purposes of the dispensation of mercy. While they verified the claims of Jesus, they impressively indicated his character as the Friend of helpless humanity: while they proclaimed, and continue to proclaim, his divine mission, they bespoke his tenderness to the weaknesses of his disciples, his pity for the sorrows of the widow, and his sympathy with the griefs and tears of the disconsolate. Though we may have begun our examination of these mighty works merely with the view of ascertaining the amount of evidence which they furnish of the truth of Christianity, and are thereby established and settled in the firm belief of its truth and divine authority, we have obtained, at the same time, from our survey of them, impressions which have softened our hearts, and invigorated our moral feelings and habits.

11. (III.) An acquaintance with the evidences of divine revelation is necessary to the stability, comfort, and usefulness of Christians. This indeed is so obvious as not to require elucidation. For, how can any one be established and settled in the faith when he is ignorant of the grounds on which it rests? How can he have comfort in the belief of the truth, while he knows not in any form the evidence which proves that truth to be divine? And how can he be useful in the circumstances in which Providence has placed him in recommending the religion of the Bible to others, when he is incapable of maintaining it and of defending it, even from the most frivolous objections? He only can reasonably hope to be stable, efficient, and joyful, who *knows* in whom he has believed,—who can say, on sufficient grounds, My faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Indeed, it appears to me, that the Christian, in any rank of life, who does not, according to his opportunities, study the

evidences of revelation, both external and internal, does great injury to himself, and disparages the wisdom of God. Why have these evidences been multiplied, and given in so many various forms, but that all the followers of Christ may become acquainted with them, and that, being acquainted with them, they may have the "strong consolation" that the Bible contains the truth, the whole truth, in regard to human redemption,—that all its promises, statements, and declarations, are truths which have issued from the God that cannot lie, and that therefore they may rely on them with the most implicit and absolute confidence?

12. (IV.) It is the duty of all students, but more especially of students of divinity, to be well acquainted with the evidences of Christianity. This particular is, no doubt, included in the remark which I formerly made, that a knowledge of the evidences is a necessary branch of a liberal education. It is important, however, to place it distinctly before our view.

13. Students at a university, while yet engaged in their philosophy course, are naturally looking forward to those pursuits and professions in life which they intend to follow. Meanwhile they are laudably exerting themselves in improving their minds, and in furnishing them with the treasures of literature and science. At length their course at college terminates, and they enter into the busy pursuits of the commercial world, or on the study of law or medicine, without any other knowledge of Christianity than what they acquired under the parental roof, or have obtained from the pulpit. Of its evidence they are entirely ignorant; and the consequence of this ignorance, in too many instances, may be melancholy and disastrous. They are thrown into the society of persons imbued with infidel principles, who sneer at Christianity, and retail some of the often-refuted but flimsy objections of Hume and Voltaire. Their faith, having no foundation to rest upon, is subverted; and if they do not renounce the profession of Christianity, they continue secretly, unless rescued by the power of divine grace, unbelievers in its truth and divine authority.

14. Now, to provide against this evil, students, while they are yet students, and before they have entered on the business and professions of life, ought to be furnished with the means of becoming well acquainted with the evidences of divine revelation. They ought to acquire that knowledge of them

by which they would be able, not only to withstand gainsayers, but to adopt the most appropriate arguments for defending the cause of the Redeemer. With regard to students of divinity, it is only necessary to say, that a thorough acquaintance with this subject is essential to their comfort, respectability, and usefulness in discharging the duties of that sacred profession for which they are candidates. They have not the credentials of apostles and inspired teachers to produce to their auditors ; but they may have it in their power to show that the truths which they preach are the same which were taught by the servants of the Most High God, and that the evidences of the divine authority of these truths are various and incontestable.

15. (V.) I only notice farther, that a knowledge of the evidences is necessary for all, and more especially for the young, to guard them against those dangers to which they are exposed. What dangers ? Is there no danger to those who are not fortified against it by appropriate knowledge from the objections of infidels against the Scriptures ? To us, the objections made against them, on account of the mysteriousness of their doctrines, appear frivolous ; but to those who are uninformed, they seem formidable. And then, is there no danger from the bold and confident tone which infidels assume, and in which they represent the intelligence, liberality, and independence of those who have succeeded in freeing themselves from the restraints of religion, more especially from the restraints of the Bible ? Is there no danger to young and ingenuous minds, without adequate and appropriate knowledge, in the scorn and ridicule with which Christianity has been, and still is, opposed, and that by men who affect great superiority in literature and science ? Above all, is there no danger from the bias of human nature towards real and practical infidelity ? Is it not proper that we should be fully prepared to encounter these evils ; and especially that, before men enter on the business of life, they should be well instructed as to the nature of the grounds on which Christians believe and are assured that they have not followed cunningly devised fables, in receiving the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ.

16. With regard to the views now given of the advantages of a familiar acquaintance with Christian evidence, I am aware, it may be alleged, that repentance towards God, and

faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are not produced by the mere force of evidence. "Among all the persons," says Dr. Dwight, "with whom, while they were anxiously solicitous about their salvation, I have had opportunity to converse, I do not remember even one who ever mentioned his own indisposition to repent, as in any degree derived from the want of evidence to support the truth of the Scripture. The number of these has been so great, that, if this were a common or even a frequent case, some one must have been found among them who had been embarrassed by this difficulty." The inference deduced from this fact is, that the reason why unbelievers continue to be so, is not the want of evidence.

In this conclusion I so far agree, that I admit that the difficulty, in all cases, lies more in the heart than in the understanding. The testimony of Scripture, confirmed by observation and experience, is, that the native disposition of the earthly mind of man is opposed to the truth; and that, therefore, though we should prove to him, by the evidence of miracles, of prophecy, and of the inherent excellency and adaptation of Heaven's communication, the divine origin of the Bible, he will nevertheless remain unbelieving, impenitent, and disobedient. It was on this ground, doubtless, that our Lord affirmed, that those who were not persuaded by Moses and the prophets to turn to God in faith and in love, would not be persuaded to do so by any evidence that might be furnished to them by one who rose from the dead. It is admitted, then, that something beside the mere power of truth and evidence, even the power of the divine Spirit, is indispensable to produce that change in the human mind, without which no man ever will receive the truth in the love of it, or really believe with the heart unto salvation.

17. But does this admission weaken or destroy the force of the remarks made in regard to the advantage and necessity of an extensive acquaintance with the evidences? Does it nullify all the arguments which I have adduced to show that such acquaintance is essential to the stability, the comfort, and usefulness of all Christians? By no means.

First, Because these are means of arriving at the knowledge and belief of the truth which God himself has provided, and which, consequently, it is the duty as well as the privilege of all to observe. For what end has he so greatly multiplied the evidences of his own communication to mankind, surrounded



it with so many proofs of its being from him, and engraven on the message itself in indelible characters the signatures of his own wisdom, and power, and goodness, but that all should examine ; and, as the effect of examination, come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved ? It is, moreover, in the use of these means that God ordinarily communicates his blessing. It is the study of the nature, substance, and evidence of divine truth that God usually renders effectual to the removal of prejudice and unbelief from the heart. It is, accordingly, to this truth in some of its forms, and through some of the channels through which it is conveyed, that all who become Christians, in the proper sense of that term, are indebted for those convictions which have issued in conversion to God.

Secondly, The admission of the unquestionable fact to which I have referred shows, to all who enter on the examination of the evidences of revelation, the necessity of carefully watching the moral disposition of their hearts, and of imploring the teaching and guidance of God's Holy Spirit. It is He alone who can produce an affinity between the objects presented in the Bible, and the mind that is directed to their contemplation. These divine objects, so perfect in all moral excellence, and surpassing in spiritual loveliness, can only be regarded with delight and complacency by him who is taught, not by flesh and blood, but by our Father who is in Heaven. To all who are anxious to obtain this accordancy between the frame of their hearts, and characters, and lessons of revealed truth, how encouraging and cheering is the promise of that truth, that the Holy Spirit will be given to them that ask him ?

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## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE DESIRABLENESS AND NECESSITY OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

1. If a revelation of the will of God, as to our present conduct and future happiness, be necessary, there is not in the world any book that can come in competition with the Bible. As for the Alcoran, there are things in it so manifestly contrary to the common light and reason of men, as are sufficient to warrant the utter rejection of it. Its pretensions to be a divine revelation cannot, as we shall afterwards see, stand the test of the slightest examination.



2. That a revelation of the will of God is desirable to mankind, few, I presume, will deny. "I have met with no serious person," says Paley, "who thinks that, even under the Christian Revelation, we have too much light, or any degree of assurance which is superfluous." At the same time, I would premise, before entering on the observations which I am about to make on this subject, that if the proofs of the divine authority of Christianity were defective, the presumption in their favour, arising from its necessity to the comfort and improvement of man, would not be sufficient to establish them. All that is aimed at by showing the desirableness and necessity of a divine revelation is, to evince that there is no antecedent probability against it; but that, on the contrary, there is much to warrant the expectation, that the Father of mercies has been pleased to grant it.

3. It seems scarcely necessary to define what is meant by the terms with which we are so familiar,—Natural and Revealed Religion. The former of these expressions has been used by some to denote everything in religion, with regard to truth and duty, which, when once discovered, may be clearly shown to have a real foundation in the nature and relations of things, and which unprejudiced reason will approve, when fairly proposed and set in a proper light. And, accordingly, very fair and goodly schemes of natural religion have been drawn up by Christian philosophers and divines, in which they have comprehended a considerable part of what is contained in the Scripture revelation; that is, the important truths and principles relating to the existence, the unity, the perfections, and attributes of God, his governing providence and moral administration, the worship that is due to him, the law that is given to mankind, or the whole of moral duty in its just extent, as relating to God, our neighbours, and ourselves, the rewards and punishments of a future state, and other articles nearly connected with these, or dependent upon them. And after having taken great pains to show that all this is perfectly agreeable to sound reason, and founded in the nature of things, they have honoured the whole with the name of natural religion. It cannot be denied, that it is a real and great service to religion to show, that the main principles and duties of it are what right reason must approve;—

4. But it does not follow, that because these things, when once clearly discovered, may be proved to be agreeable to

reason, and to have a real foundation in the nature of things, that therefore reason alone, in the present state of mankind, if left to itself, without higher assistance, would merely, by its own force, have discovered all these things with their genuine consequences, and have applied them to their proper uses, for directing men in the true knowledge and practice of religion. "A great many things," says Mr. Locke, "which we have been bred in the belief of from our cradles, we take for unquestionable truths, and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them, had revelation been silent. Every one may observe a great many truths, which he receives at first from others, and readily affirms to be consonant to reason, which he would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond his strength, to have discovered himself. Native and original truth is not so easily wrought out of the mine, as we, who have it ready dug and fashioned to our hands, are apt to imagine."

5. According to others, natural religion is not merely that which is naturally and necessarily known to all men, but that which reason, duly exercised and improved, is able by its own natural force to discover, without the assistance of extraordinary revelation. In other words, it is that which is discovered, or which is presumed might have been discovered, by the unaided light of reason.

By revealed religion, on the contrary, as distinguished from that which is usually called natural, is to be understood that knowledge of religion which was originally communicated in an extraordinary and supernatural way, by an immediate revelation from God. If, therefore, there be such a thing as revealed religion; if it hath pleased God to make discoveries of his will to mankind, with regard to religious truth and duty, in a way of extraordinary revelation, the most natural way, and that which is best accommodated to the present state of mankind, seems to be this, that the revelation should be imparted to some person or persons, to be by them communicated to others in his name; at the same time, furnishing them with sufficient proofs and credentials, to show that they were indeed sent and inspired by Him.

6. That the communication of such revelation is possible to God, cannot be denied by any one who admits his being, and who entertains just ideas of his perfections. He who has formed us capable of knowing himself, and the relations in

which we stand to him, can surely convey all necessary knowledge to our minds. Can it be supposed that the Author of our being has it not in his power to communicate ideas to our minds, for instructing and informing us in what it nearly concerns us to know? Our not being able clearly to explain the manner in which this is done, is no just objection against it. An extraordinary action of God upon the human mind, which the word inspiration is now used to denote, is not more inconceivable than the ordinary action of mind on body, or body on mind. Such was the opinion of Lord Bolingbroke, though he was himself among the opposers of divine revelation.

7. The next questions for our consideration are—Is it probable that God has given an extraordinary revelation of his will to mankind? and is such a revelation necessary?

In prosecuting the important inquiry which these questions suggest, I would premise, that we ought to guard against unduly exalting or depreciating the light of nature and the power of reason. The knowledge which is legitimately acquired from these, to whatever extent it may reach, cannot be opposed to the knowledge which is obtained from revelation. For, though the latter discovers several things relative to truth and duty, which the former could not have discovered at all, or not with sufficient clearness and certainty; yet, as both are supposed to proceed from God, there must be a harmony between them. They are therefore not to be set in opposition; nor is the one of them designed to exclude the other. In fact, God manifested himself in both these ways from the beginning; so that it may, with the greatest propriety and justice, be said, that he has never left himself without witness.

8. At the same time, we must guard against the fallacy entertained by persons unfriendly to revealed religion, of esteeming, as the offspring of mere reason, those fair and beautiful systems of natural religion which men have composed by the light of revelation. If we take into account the influence of a primitive revelation on the opinions of mankind, we shall find it difficult to determine what is the precise limit in regard to knowledge to which human reason, if left to itself, would have advanced. Far less can this limit be fixed with respect to those who enjoy the discoveries of divine revelation. The question, as to the desirableness and necessity of divine revelation, is to be decided by actual facts. To the consideration of this question we shall now proceed.

That there are probable grounds *a priori* to expect a divine revelation, and miracles in attestation of it, will appear from a consideration of the following particulars.

9. (I.) From the infinite importance and utility of religion to mankind. The constitution of human nature renders it necessary to its happiness and moral improvement, to its enjoyment of present blessings, and to its hope of future good. It only furnishes the foundation of whatever is great and holy in man. It only meets the extent of his wants, and is commensurate with his immortal existence. What were man without some knowledge of its principles and doctrines, without the restraints which it imposes, the purification which it effects, the consolations which it yields, and the sublime expectations which it inspires?

Suppose it granted, that a Creator exists; only two suppositions can be entertained: either man was turned naked and ignorant into the world, with less power to provide for his comfort and subsistence than the lowest savage whom modern discoveries have brought to our acquaintance; or he was instructed, through the agency of his Creator, in the means of supplying his immediate wants, and of performing the various purposes of his being.\*

It will be admitted that the habits and pursuits of mankind but ill qualify them to discover the great and fundamental truths of religion from the works of nature. Simple as the analogical reasoning from effect to cause, from contrivance to a contriver, may seem, still it is reasoning,—and as such, it is the business of a mind in some degree improved and abstracted from sensible objects. In the first stages of society there are no such minds; and it is no more surprising that, by the great body of mankind in every age, the world is seen and inhabited without exciting awe and admiration, than that a peasant who finds himself placed, by the fortune of his birth, in any particular country, should be little solicitous about its history, antiquity, or earliest founders.—They are so taken up with worldly concerns, and carried off by a variety of pleasures and cares, so entangled in sensible and material objects, that, if left merely to themselves, there is little likelihood of their forming right ideas of things spiritual and invisible. It is generally by education and instruction that these principles first enter into their minds; and where they have not been

\* Sumner on the Records of the Creation, vol. i. pp. 29, 30.



taught or instructed, they know little or nothing about them. Observation teaches us that it is by slow degrees the human mind rises to great improvement and cultivation ; and that it is by the experience of successive generations that knowledge is accumulated. Had there been no divine instruction directly communicated to mankind, is it probable that they would reserve any portion of their time and attention for the investigation and the practice of religion ; and this in resistance to the engrossing influence of the cares of this life ? Is it not likely that they would sink into a state of the deepest ignorance and degradation ?

10. But can we suppose that He who made man would not give him by infallible revelation the knowledge of himself, so necessary to the improvement of his faculties, to the maintenance of that rank which Providence has assigned him in the scale of rational and accountable beings, and so essential to his right discharge of those duties which so clearly devolve upon him ? When we consider that benevolence which is inherent and perfect in the divine character, is it not in the highest degree probable that God would communicate to mankind information concerning his own nature and attributes, his moral government and overruling providence, the worship and homage which ought to be rendered to him by his reasonable creatures, the way in which sinful men may obtain pardon and acceptance with him, and a future state of retributions ? Would not the Almighty Father of the human race give an express revelation to his children regarding these infinitely important subjects, in place of leaving them to their own unsatisfactory reasonings ? His perfect benevolence, viewed in connexion with the essential importance and utility of religious knowledge, must surely be considered as furnishing a probable ground to expect a divine revelation.

11. (II.) This probability is greatly strengthened when we consider what must have been the circumstances and necessities of the first parents of mankind. However remote the origin of the race may have been, there must have been a period when men were wholly ignorant and inexperienced, and when there was no fellow-creature in the earth from whom they could derive instruction. In whatever state we may suppose them to have been at first brought into being, whether in a state of childhood or maturity, they must have been entirely helpless and destitute without some peculiar aid from God.



Without experience, without habits, without parents to give them instruction, or to communicate to them those rules of action which are formed by long-continued observation, their condition must have been totally different from ours : and unless they had other faculties than those which we possess, they must either have received immediate direction from some superior Being, or have perished. It was necessary, therefore, that God should act towards them in the place of a parent, and either instruct his innocent but helpless offspring himself, or commit their instruction to the care of superior beings.

12. The force of these remarks is strengthened when it is considered by what slow degrees mankind, when left to the progress of their own experience, are found to attain any of the arts which contribute to the ornament and comfort of civilized life. The barbarous state of the inhabitants of countries newly discovered, their general ignorance of arts and deficiency of morals, has naturally introduced a vague idea, that man was originally at his birth or creation a savage. But according to the Mosaic account, which agrees too with the suggestions of reason, the savage state was not the original state of man. Even among the grandsons of Adam we are told not only of the use of brass and iron, but of the division of labour into separate branches ; we read not only of the arts which support life, but of those which contribute to its amusement, the harp and the organ. When we consider in how rude a state, compared with this, the Mexicans and Peruvians were found, though they had belonged for some centuries to a settled and populous community, we shall have reason on our side in concluding that mankind were not at first abandoned altogether to their own ingenuity in the gradual invention of useful arts ; and that many of them, under various circumstances of situation and climate, sunk at different periods into a barbarism to which they were not originally created. When to these observations we add, that it approaches as high a degree of certainty as is consistent with the nature of the case, that man was originally indebted to his Creator, not only for the organs of speech but also for the power of using them, we have the strongest grounds for believing that God would not, and did not, leave man without communicating to him all the instruction which was necessary for his comfort and well-being.

But if this divine instruction was necessary to fit man for the ordinary concerns of life, how much more must it have

been necessary for the purpose of making him acquainted with the higher objects and duties of his existence! The latter was as necessary as the former, and infinitely more important; inasmuch as the soul is more valuable than the body, and as eternity cannot bear a comparison with time. If we take into account then the condition of man at the creation—the importance of religious knowledge to the right fulfilment of those duties for which he was called into being—and the goodness of that God who had given him life, and breath, and all things, nothing will appear more improbable than that man should have been left entirely to himself, or that a divine and immediate revelation should not have been given to him.

13. (III.) This conclusion is strengthened, when we consider the provisions of divine providence for supplying the ordinary wants of men. God has “not left himself without witness of his benevolence, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” How constant has been the kindness of Providence in distributing blessings among mankind,—blessings which furnish evidence to every age that God has not left the human race unprovided for! The elements of nature, and the inferior animals above and around them, have been rendered tributary to their subsistence, health, ease, and comfort; and these concur with the established order of things to demonstrate, that they are under the protection and superintending power of the Almighty Maker and Upholder of all things.

But if mercies have been communicated to supply the ordinary wants of men, is it not probable, that the goodness from which those mercies have flowed, would have made provision for the spiritual necessities of our nature? Is it likely that the infinitely compassionate Being who bestowed the less, would withhold what was incomparably greater,—the knowledge of himself, and of the other great and fundamental truths of religion? Especially when we consider,—

14. (IV.) That the method of acquiring knowledge by a divine revelation is most suitable to the constitution of man, and to the circumstances in which he is placed. He is indebted for his knowledge chiefly, not to personal observation, which is limited, but to the communications of others; and he is formed so as naturally to confide in the testimony of his fellow-men, and to derive from it the most important advantages. In infancy and youth he is placed under the guidance

of parents, and the tuition of instructors ; and the knowledge which he thus acquires has an influence on his future character and history. Children, as soon as they are capable of understanding declarations and promises, are led by their constitution to rely upon them. This disposition to sincerity in themselves, and to give credit to others, whether we call it instinct, or whatever name we give it, must be considered as the effect of their constitution.

But on the supposition that God would give any revelation at all to man regarding subjects essentially connected with his present and future happiness, is it not highly probable that he would convey it in that mode which is suited to his nature, condition, and habits? The great truths of religion relate to a Being, and to a state of existence, beyond our observation and experience ; and even though they could be discovered by unassisted reason, they would not produce the same effect on the human mind, as if made known by the declarations and the testimony of persons who had opportunities of perfect information.

15. The communicating of divine knowledge by express revelation is not only agreeable to the constitution of man, but to the circumstances in which he is placed. Were we even to suppose that man were capable, by his reasoning powers, of making all the discoveries for which a revelation could be desired, his actual circumstances are such as to render a revelation necessary, and consequently its bestowment probable. For it is by slow degrees, as observation shows, that the human mind rises to great improvement. Were there no divine instruction to guide mankind, sensible and material objects would engross their first and chief attention ; and the considerations of religion would certainly be postponed till they had provided for their temporal wants and necessities. It is highly improbable that man in these circumstances, especially in the early ages, could have reasoned out a just system even of natural religion. If he had been left to himself to find out such truths, he would, for a long period, have been left without God and religion.

But if religion be of all subjects the most important, if upon it our future happiness depends, is it probable that God would subject mankind, during a succession of ages, to utter ignorance concerning it? Is it not far more likely that he would communicate to them some knowledge of himself and of his will by express revelation? We are to connect with these views,—

16. (V.) The common sentiments of mankind in favour of the desirableness and real existence of such revelation. That God has made a revelation of his will to men, has been the general sense of mankind in all ages and nations. This might have been originally owing to a tradition of some extraordinary revelation or revelations really communicated in the earliest times to the first ancestors of the human race, from whom it was transmitted to their descendants, though in process of time in a great measure corrupted and lost. Or at least it shows that men have generally thought that a revelation from God to men was both possible and probable, and that this was agreeable to the ideas they had formed of the wisdom and goodness of God, and of his concern for mankind. It also shows that they were sensible of the need they stood in of such extraordinary discoveries from God, to instruct and direct them in the knowledge of his will and their duty. It must be owned, indeed, that this notion of an intercourse between God and men, in a way of extraordinary revelation, has given occasion to impostures and delusions; that it has induced men of warm imaginations to take their own reveries for divine inspirations; and that artful impostors have taken advantage from it to put their own inventions upon the people for divine discoveries and injunctions, in order to answer the ends of their ambition and avarice. But it affords no reasonable presumption that there never was a true revelation given from God to man. All that can be fairly concluded from it is, that the best and most excellent things may be perverted and abused by the folly and wickedness of men.

17. The learned and the ignorant have alike felt the necessity of divine revelation, and have expressed their hopes that it might be bestowed. Socrates and Cicero, as well as the early enemies of Christianity—Porphyry, Iamblichus, and others, acknowledged the necessity of divine instruction; and scarcely has this necessity ever been denied in any age or country of the world, but by the deists of modern times. And from this universal sentiment of mankind in favour of the desirableness of a revelation from heaven, we infer that the bestowment of such a revelation is in entire accordance with the views which man forms of the character of the Deity, and of the insufficiency of reason for his spiritual guidance.

The considerations now suggested furnish very strong probable grounds to expect a divine revelation. This probability



is greatly strengthened when we consider the circumstances which render an extraordinary interposition for the instruction and religious improvement of mankind essential to their peace, and hope, and happiness. We shall here have to deal with facts—facts which prove the extreme blindness and moral turpitude of men where the blessing of revelation is not enjoyed; and which forcibly teach us, that unless God had graciously shed the light of heavenly truth on the mind, darkness would have continued to cover the whole earth, and gross darkness the people. In showing the necessity of divine revelation, I remark,—

18. (I.) The want of authority and legal sanction in the reasonings of men.

Were we even to suppose that man could discover, by his reasoning powers, the great subjects of religion,—that these subjects, by the accumulated observation and experience of many generations, could be thus brought to light, it is obvious that, notwithstanding, there would be a great difference in respect of authority and weight between truths conveyed to us as probable from the reason of our fellow-creatures, and those communicated to us by the direct declaration of God. How were the persons, by whom those truths were discovered, to impress them on the minds of men? How were they to produce conviction in the minds of others of their reality and importance? They might inform them of the process by which conviction had been produced on their own minds; but how slender an impression would such information make on the bulk of mankind! To many it would be altogether uninteresting: to the majority it would seem a fine speculation, and would vanish from their minds when they come in contact with the business and temptations of life, as the visions of the night are dissipated by the realities of the day.

19. If we look at mankind as they always have been and actually are, generally averse to the consideration of divine things, and prone to the indulgence of evil habits and passions, can we suppose that the most powerful reasonings would produce extensive and permanent effects? Are not the most powerful reasoners themselves liable to error and encompassed with infirmity? How, then, could they expect to be listened to as infallible instructors and guides, or to be successful in enlightening mankind, and in leading them to the practice of virtue? However useful the truths might be which they had to communicate, might it not be alleged, that as they were liable to err, they might be deceived in regard to them; and as



there was no authoritative sanction to enforce their adoption, they might be disregarded with impunity?

We find, accordingly, that the speculations of the most distinguished philosophers, in the most enlightened countries, had little influence beyond the schools in which they were promulgated. If in any case the discoveries of unassisted reason could prove sufficient for the illumination and moral improvement of mankind, we might justly have expected that the men of extraordinary talents of Greece and Rome, who devoted their lives to the pursuits of wisdom, and who travelled into foreign countries to increase their knowledge, would have attempted to lead their countrymen to just notions of divine things, and to reclaim them from superstition and idolatry. But they made no effort to recover the multitude from the gross ignorance into which they had sunk. They were placed in circumstances in which, whatever might have been their own views of truth and duty, they had it little in their power to influence the notions of their fellow-men around them. They wanted the sanctions of divine authority to enforce their instructions; they were not the authorized ministers of religion, on whom it devolved to explain the doctrines relating to the gods and to their worship; their opinions besides on these matters were so obscure, and so much at variance with each other, that their effect, had they been communicated beyond the walls of the schools, could only be to bewilder, if indeed they would have any effect whatever. Philosophers, therefore, despised the people as incapable of understanding their speculations, or of profiting by them. "Philosophy," says Cicero, "is content with a few judges; it designedly shuns the multitude, and is by them suspected and disliked—so that if any man should set himself to vilify all philosophy, he might do it with approbation and applause of the people."

20. A divine revelation then was necessary, not only to make known divine truth with infallible certainty, but to give it authority and power for enlightening the understanding, renovating the heart, and influencing the practice of men. While philosophy never attempted the conversion of a single hamlet from idolatry, it was indispensably required that, by supernatural and infallible instruction, mankind should be convinced of the vanity of idols of wood and stone as objects of worship, and be persuaded to turn from such follies to the worship and service of the living and true God. While philosophers could not pretend to any divine authority to enforce their dictates,

their most plausible speculations had little weight. Whereas if they had come in the name and by the authority of God himself, and had been able to produce proper credentials of their divine mission, this would have engaged and commanded the attention of the people in a quite different manner from their philosophical reasonings, to which other arguments and reasonings were opposed by philosophers of great name. What Lactantius says of the precepts of the philosophers may be equally applied to their doctrines: "Their precepts," says he, "have no weight, because they are human, and need a greater authority, even a divine one. No man therefore believes them, because he that hears them looks upon him that gives those precepts to be a man as well as himself." The philosophers themselves were sensible of this. The latter Platonists and Pythagoreans, after Christianity appeared, pretended to frequent impulses, revelations, inspirations, and divine communications, which proceeded from a conviction that philosophy, in order to its having a proper authority on the minds of men, ought to come from God: but as they were not able to produce solid proofs of their divine mission, their philosophy and pretences fell together,—whilst the Christian religion, which in reality had its original from heaven, though destitute of all worldly advantages, yet being attended with the most convincing evidences of a divine authority, effected that which philosophy could never have accomplished in subverting that system of pagan polytheism and idolatry, which had the prescription of many ages to plead, and which seemed so firmly established, that no merely human wisdom or power was able to overturn it.

Besides, the ancient philosophers, especially when they treated of religion and divine things, involved their sentiments in great obscurity, and were so far from intending them for general use that they carefully concealed them from the people. Whatever was the cause of this obscurity, whether it was owing to their not having just and clear ideas themselves of these matters, or to a fear of their being accounted enemies to the popular religion, or to their being of opinion that the people were not fitted to receive these discoveries, but would make a wrong use of them; to whichever of these causes this obscurity was owing, and it is not improbable that all these causes contributed to it, it shows they were not qualified to lead the people into the right knowledge of religion,

nor could their instructions be of general use. But it is the great advantage and glory of the Christian revelation, that, as it was designed to promote the salvation of all, so it was published clearly and openly to the people, that it might be of universal benefit for instructing men in the right knowledge of God and religion.

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### CHAPTER III.

THE DESIRABLENESS AND NECESSITY OF DIVINE REVELATION : THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON, AND THE IGNORANCE OF MAN.

THERE are many considerations which, as we have seen, render it highly probable that the Deity should give a revelation of himself and of his will to mankind ; and this probability is greatly strengthened by the circumstances which prove, that without a divine revelation mankind must have remained in a state of deplorable ignorance and wretchedness. Of these circumstances I noticed the want of authority and legal sanction in the reasonings of men. I proceed now to mention, in confirmation of the same position,—

1. (II.) The insufficiency of reason, and the consequent ignorance of mankind. When we speak of the insufficiency of reason, we do not mean to say anything regarding the precise limit to which the human understanding can advance in its discoveries ; but rather, by an appeal to the history and actual condition of mankind, to show its incompetency to point out the great subjects included in true religion. These, though perfectly accordant with human reason when revealed ; and though it be most suitable that reason should exercise itself in ascertaining, comparing, and elucidating the truths of natural and revealed religion,—experience proves that it requires supernatural instruction clearly to make them known. The question, therefore, is not, to what extent the being and attributes of God, the existence of a superintending Providence, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, are discoverable by the light of nature ; but it is this—to what extent have these fundamental truths of religion been actually discovered by the unassisted reason of man ?

2. Nor can even the attainments of the wise and the learned in pagan nations be justly adduced as evidence of the powers of human nature in matters of religion, when left

merely to itself and its own unassisted force, except it can be shown that the notions they taught were merely the product of their own inquiries, independently of all foreign instruction. But whatever may be supposed of the possibility of this, yet, as far as we can judge by the accounts antiquity has left us, this was not in fact the case. It is universally acknowledged, that the best and the wisest men among the Greeks travelled from Greece into Egypt, to get at the knowledge of the divine unity, and the like important truths. But what likelihood is there that the Egyptians found them out of themselves, when it is owned, that the best and greatest philosophers of Greece, who were much more remarkable for cultivating the arts of reasoning, did not so? Nor, indeed, was this the Egyptian method of philosophizing. They did not reason out the principles of their theology, but professed to have derived it from ancient tradition, which they kept as a secret to themselves, and carefully concealed from the people, though they were far from keeping it pure and uncorrupted. And the higher we mount towards the first ages, the less probability there is that men found out those principles by their unassisted reason. Afterwards, in the ages of learning and philosophy, it might have been justly expected that they would have carried these principles to a high degree of improvement; but notwithstanding the helps the philosophers were furnished with, both from ancient tradition and their own rational disquisitions, we find that in religion they were bewildered, spoke like children, and were incapable of pointing out its fundamental truths amid the darkness that thickened around them, and the gross darkness that rested on the people.

The weakness of reason, and the ignorance of mankind, have been extremely great in regard to God,—his character, attributes, worship, and providence—the immortality of the soul, the pardon of sin, and the means of subduing the corruption of our nature. These form the foundation of all religion and they are essentially connected with the moral improvement, the spiritual comfort, and the future hopes of man.

3. (I.) With regard to God.—While the marks of intelligence and design, presented in all the works of nature, furnish to the human mind the most simple and conclusive proofs of the being of the Creator, and of his infinite wisdom and power, it is certain, that where the light of Scripture has not been enjoyed, mankind have been grossly ignorant of his



character and perfections. In place of being led, by the works of creation around them, to acknowledge and adore the one living and true God, and to reserve for him the supreme love and homage of their hearts, they did service to them which by nature are no gods, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. While in every condition they owned the existence of divine power, they imagined that this power resided in numerous and visible objects. At an early period of the history of the world they deified the host of heaven, and gave religious homage to the sun, and moon, and stars. They afterwards placed among the objects of their worship their fellow mortals, who were distinguished by their legislative wisdom, their skill in arms, or their public beneficence. To these, and especially to one of them, Jupiter, they ascribed divine perfections ; while, at the same time, they considered them as animated by the passions, and guilty of the excesses of sinful men. At length they constituted the different parts of inanimate nature, and, in some nations, the brute animals, gods and goddesses ; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. This system of polytheism and idolatry, to which mankind, at a most advanced stage of civilization, and during many generations, clung with devoted attachment, was consummated by embracing among the objects of worship evil beings, acknowledged to be such ; so that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, and not to God.

4. Nor was this the condition of barbarous nations merely, but of the polite and civilized inhabitants of Greece and Rome, who have been so highly famed for their skill in arts, and their ardour in the acquirement of knowledge. Constituting the works of nature, and even the works of their own hands, the objects of their worship, the number of their gods was incredibly great ; and nothing can give us a more melancholy idea of the state of religion among them than this, that their popular system of theology was full of the genealogies, the rapes, the adulteries, the contentions of their gods,—that these things were acted on the theatres with the applause and approbation of the people,—that these were the deities to whom temples and altars were erected, and sacrifices offered,—to whose statues divine honours were paid, and whom the poets sung in all the charms of flowing numbers.



The philosophers, priests, and magistrates, in place of attempting to enlighten the people, and elevate them to just conceptions of the character of God, employed their influence in enforcing the duty of adhering to the system of polytheism and idolatry already established. They themselves had most erroneous notions of the divinity—spoke in terms which showed their uncertainty whether there were one or many gods—mingled their views, even when they seemed to approach to the truth, with most dangerous errors—were mainly instrumental in corrupting the ancient tradition relating to the one true God, and the creation of the world; and, in many cases, they exerted their efforts to subvert the fundamental principles of all religious belief. The best of them candidly owned their ignorance; maintained that they ought not to assert anything concerning the gods, for they had no knowledge of them.

5. In this state of deplorable ignorance in regard to the first truth of all religion, were the most enlightened nations of the earth; and though their ignorance was far from being excusable, it teaches us, that the doctrine of the divine unity is not made known so clearly by reason and nature, as to render further light undesirable and unnecessary. The argument for this fundamental truth, arising from the consideration that a necessary and self-existent being must be *one*, possesses much weight; but it amounts to no more than a high degree of probability. The other argument for this doctrine, derived from the unity of design, perceptible throughout the works of nature, is more fitted to impress the mind. All who are capable of reflection may understand that unity of counsel may be inferred from the perfect harmony which is seen to subsist in the great system of the universe. But as it is conceivable that more beings than one could unite in the same contrivance, and in the same plan, mankind are still left in some degree of uncertainty. Besides, this argument requires, from its very nature, an attentive and extensive survey of the works of God, which only the learned and the contemplative have leisure and capacity to make; and the doctrine of the unity of God would scarcely be known; or, if in any measure known, would not maintain a permanent influence on the minds of the great body of mankind, when left to discover it by their own reasoning. Hence the tendency which they have always shown to polytheism and idolatry.

6. But they have manifested as much ignorance of the perfections of God, more especially of his goodness, as they have of his unity. Though in regard to his beneficence he has never left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, the cruel rites which all nations have practised in his worship, attest the erroneous views which they entertained of the character of God. The deities whom they worshipped were objects of dread and terror, who were considered to be animated by malignant and revengeful passions. Many of them were acknowledged to be evil beings, the authors of all the calamities which afflict the human race, and ever prone to every kind of mischief. Hence men presented in sacrifice their fellow-men, and even their nearest and dearest relatives, to appease their wrath. This cruel and immoral practice obtained among all nations, and continued for a long time to be in use among the Greeks and Romans upon extraordinary occasions.

7. Mankind had also most erroneous views of the holiness and justice of God—errors which had, and must have had, a deteriorating influence on their moral character and conduct. How remote from the truth must have been their notions of the divine purity when they worshipped monsters of iniquity as gods, beings who were represented as perpetrating the foulest crimes! Could they be supposed to have had just views of duty and of moral obligation, the objects of whose worship were so impure? The greatest excesses arose out of their religion. Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, they gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to commit all uncleanness with greediness. Their magistrates and priesthood, legislators and philosophers, were concerned in countenancing this ignorance of God involved in the system of polytheism and idolatry which was established, and would not allow any infringement of its rites, however grossly immoral.

8. But without some accurate conceptions of the infinite purity and holiness of the divine character, the virtue of man has no stable foundation to rest upon, no adequate motive to enforce its practice, no infallible standard with which to compare it. A practical recognition of God as the holy and righteous Governor of the world is necessary to the moral improvement of man. How else can he entertain the conviction

of his responsibility to the Judge of the world ; or of the imperfection which attaches to his nature when contrasted with spotless purity ? If to know and to recognise the perfections of infinite goodness, holiness, wisdom, and power, and to have the best grounds for believing that these attributes of God are exercised for the ultimate advantage of the universe, be happiness suited to a rational and immortal being, must not a state of ignorance in regard to these involve in it pollution, and misery, and spiritual death ?

9. (II.) If the ignorance of mankind, without the light of revelation, of the unity and character of God, has been great, it has not been less with respect to divine providence. In proportion as they receded from the knowledge of the one true God, and became immersed in idolatry and polytheism, did their notions of providence become erroneous and debased. They imagined that the administration of the supreme government was divided among the many gods and goddesses whom they worshipped,—to whom respectively were assigned different provinces in which they were sovereign and independent. In place, therefore, of regarding the order and course of the universe as under the direction and control of one infinitely wise and gracious God, they considered it not as subordinate to the will of any one being, but liable to be capriciously meddled with by numerous deities, who were animated with all the jealousies of weak mortals.

10. Of these deities, Fortune, whom they regarded as blind and inconstant, had, according to their notions, the chief influence in the events of this life. “Through the world,” says the elder Pliny, “in all places, and at all times, Fortune is universally invoked by all persons. This alone has the praise or blame of everything, and is at the same time worshipped and reproached ; esteemed by the most of mankind to be blind, uncertain, various, and inconstant, a favourer of such as are unworthy : to this all events are attributed, both prosperous and adverse, and in the whole management of human affairs this fills up both sides of the account.” The people besides considered providence as extending only to the affairs of this life, and therefore they applied to the gods for riches, health, and prosperity, but not for wisdom, or virtue, or moral endowments. All men attributed the external commodities they enjoyed, their plenty of corn, wine, oil, and fruits, to the gods ; “but no man ever acknowledged,” says Cicero, “his having

received his virtue from God." This is the judgment of all mankind, that the gifts of fortune were to be asked of God, but that a man is to expect wisdom only from himself.\*

11. Did the philosophers attempt to give juster views of providence to the people? On the contrary, many of them denied the existence of a providence in the affairs of men. The Epicureans and others maintained that the gods gave themselves no concern with the events of this life, and took no notice of human actions. Tacitus having represented it as uncertain in his judgment whether human affairs were governed by fate and immutable necessity, or by chance, observes, that in this matter the wisest of the ancients and their followers were of different sentiments: and that many had this opinion fixed in their minds, that neither our beginning, nor our end, nor men at all, are minded by the gods. Pliny represents it as ridiculous to imagine that the God who is supreme takes any care of human affairs; and adds, that without doubt the divinity would be polluted with such a sad and troublesome ministry. It was urged by many learned men among the pagans, as an objection against the professors of Christianity, that they asserted a providence as extending to the affairs and actions of men, and even to their most secret thoughts. They represented it as an absurd thing in them to believe that their God, whom they can neither see nor show, inspects diligently into the manners of all men, into their actions, and even their words and hidden thoughts, whereas they conceived that he could neither attend to every particular whilst he is employed about the whole, nor be able to take care of the whole, being busied about particulars.

12. Even those of the philosophers who, like Socrates and Plato, maintained that providence extends to individuals, and that not the least motion or action can be concealed from God, spoke of the providence of the gods in the plural, and even of the gods which the laws directed men to worship. They spoke not thus in accommodation to the popular manner of expression: for they systematically held in common with the multitude the views denoted by such phraseology. Even Plato supposed that the dominion and superintendence of this lower world was vested in the sun, moon, and stars; and he strongly recommended them therefore to the worship of the people.

13. If to these sources of error regarding the providence

\* De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 36.



of God we add the notions which many of the philosophers entertained of fate, we shall have abundant evidence of the perplexity and darkness of their views on this fundamental doctrine of natural religion. Their opinion was, that all things are under the control of fate or blind destiny ; that in the constitution of the world even Jupiter was restrained by natural necessity and the inobsequiousness of matter, so that he could not always do the things that he would ; and that in consequence some men are unavoidably of bad and perverse dispositions, and that good men are necessarily exposed to external evils and calamities.

14. How necessary then was a divine revelation to assure mankind that the only true and invisible God, the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, extends his providential care to all the creatures he has made ; that nothing can befall them by blind chance or capricious fatal necessity ; that the whole system of universal nature has been established and is maintained by infinite wisdom and goodness ; that all things are under his direction and control ; that the secrets of the heart of every individual are open to his inspection ; and that all must hereafter render an account to him ! This divine knowledge could only proceed to man from the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.

15. (III.) Let us consider what have been the views of mankind without the light of divine revelation in regard to a future world. This is a subject of deep interest to every one, and the belief of its reality is a most powerful principle of action. One generation after another is borne along by irresistible sway into eternity, and we are rapidly advancing to the same invisible regions. Our incapability of penetrating the dark gloom that lies beyond death, or to discover the condition of those who have departed from this world, naturally increases our anxiety to obtain information concerning the unseen state. But to what source shall we look for this information ? Is it to our reasoning powers ? We shall find that the answers which they give to our inquiries, apart from revelation, are not sufficient to remove doubt and disquietude from the mind. We must, therefore, look up to a compassionate God for the knowledge which is requisite to relieve our fears and sustain our hopes.

16. Knowing as we do from divine revelation the character of God, and from observation and experience the growing



capacities of improvement inherent in the human mind, we are apt to think that mankind, without any direct discovery on the subject, might have inferred with considerable certainty the existence of a future and endless state of being. Might it not be justly argued, that God, who is infinitely wise and good, can do nothing in vain; that wherever he bestows high powers, and endows with susceptibilities of advancing improvement, he designs that opportunities should be given for their full development. But with regard to the mind of man this design is not accomplished in the present life. It often happens that, after attaining to a high degree of cultivation and capability of usefulness, man is removed by death from the present scene. Can we conclude that he has altogether ceased to exist though taken away from this world? Can we believe that the all-wise and gracious God has formed the nature of man possessed of such elevated powers and susceptibilities without a reference to futurity? "When we consider," to use the words of Cicero, "with what swiftness of thought the soul is endued, with what a wonderful memory of things past and foresight of things to come; how many arts, how many sciences, how many wonderful inventions it has found out, we are persuaded that the nature which is possessed of such faculties cannot be mortal." Or, to express ourselves in the words of Cyrus and Xenophon, "We cannot imagine that the soul which lives while it is in this mortal body, should, when separated from it, die; on the contrary, it seems more reasonable to believe that when the mind is separated from the body, then it should become most of all sensible and intelligent."

17. By such reasoning we may endeavour to show the reality of a future state. Arguments in proof of the existence of a subsequent state of being may be derived,—First, from the high intellectual faculties of the human soul; secondly, from our capacities of progressive improvement; thirdly, from our desire of future being, our longing after immortality; fourthly, from the feelings of conscience respecting good and evil, merit and demerit, and the insufficiency of this world to fulfil the high moral ends of which man is capable; fifthly, from the moral character of God connected with the present disordered state of things; sixthly, from the various analogies of nature; seventhly, from the appearance which this world presents, as being only the beginning of a plan in progress but not completed; and, eighthly, from the circumstance that

belief in a future state is necessary to the order and well-being of society.

It is admitted that these views severally and combined furnish strong ground of probability in favour of a future state. But, notwithstanding, experience proves that they cannot be relied on with entire certainty. Some of them are of too abstract a nature to be easily understood or strongly felt by the great bulk of mankind. Such as they are, the most important of them were not clearly perceived, nor presented in combined force, till after the gospel had illuminated the world.

18. Accordingly, we find that many of the ancient philosophers, and in the politer ages of Greece and Rome, by far the greater number rejected the doctrine of a future state, and set themselves in opposition to it as an untenable opinion. Those who advocated the doctrine did not pretend to say that it was supported by such evidence as removed doubt from their minds, or yielded even a high degree of certainty. On the contrary, they expressed, and sometimes in very affecting circumstances, their doubts and fears on the subject. The uncertainty they were under was often the true source of those variations which may be observed in their writings in regard to the immortality of the soul, and of their ambiguous and sometimes contradictory way of talking on this subject.

19. Socrates, one of the earliest advocates for the immortality of the soul, in discoursing with his friends concerning a future state, expresses his hope that he should go to good men after death. In his apology to his judges, he comforts himself with the consideration that there is much ground to hope that death is good: for either the dead man is nothing and hath not a sense of anything, or it is only a change of the soul hence to another place. He concludes with these remarkable words: "It is now time to depart hence: I am going to die; you shall continue in life,—but which of us shall be in a better state is unknown to all but God."

20. Cicero expresses himself to the same effect. Addressing his friends, he says:—"I will endeavour to explain to you what you desire, not however as one speaking of certain things, but of probable conjectures, and farther than this we cannot go."

Seneca, in the same letter in which he uses that much-admired expression, that death is the birth-day of a new existence, says that immortality is only a pleasing dream. He

considers our state after death as the same with that which was before we began to be. We are lighted and extinguished, we suffer something in the interval, but before and after we are nothing. Would we not reckon it a very foolish thing, if any man should think that the candle is in a worse state after it is burnt than before it commenced? And where is the difference between not beginning to be, and ceasing to exist?

21. Similar sentiments might be quoted from the writings of other ancient philosophers; but these may suffice. Socrates, Cicero, and Seneca, may be considered as a fair representation of the philosophers of Greece and Rome. If their reasonings concerning a future state made so slight an impression on themselves, how feeble must have been their effect on the mind of others! Was not a divine revelation necessary, therefore, to give confirmation to the evidence which the light of nature furnishes in favour of the immortality of the soul, to adapt this evidence to mankind generally, and to fit it to convince the understanding, and improve the heart? The inferences which unassisted reason deduces from nature acquire force by that gospel which has brought life and immortality to light.

22. This conclusion is strengthened when we recollect that all the ancient advocates of the doctrine of a future state defended it generally upon false grounds, and mixed errors and absurdities with their reasonings in its support. It was maintained by some of them that the soul is immortal, because it is a portion of the divine essence. They all held its pre-existence, and derived from this consideration the chief argument in proof of its immortality. Their Elysium was but of temporary duration: and even the souls that were supposed to be admitted into heaven were not in the possession of happiness everlasting in the strict and proper sense. "For it was a notion which generally obtained among them, that at certain periods which the Stoics termed conflagrations, there should be an utter end put to the present state of things; and the souls of all men, and even of those which had become gods, demons, or heroes, were to be resumed into the universal soul, and thereby lose their individual existence."

23. But further: the moral improvement and comfort of man require not only the certain knowledge of a future state, but that it is a state of rewards and punishments. But what evidence does nature afford of the existence of rewards in a future world? It does not follow that because man is to exist

in a state subsequent to the present, he is therefore to be placed in a state of superior happiness. That man is a sinner, and that he is in consequence liable to suffering and death, are facts which come within the observation and experience of every one. How can he know then, without express information from God, that he is to enjoy superior blessedness in the life to come? Even though he were assured that all his sins are forgiven, would it be evident from the light of nature that future felicity is in reserve for him? Or, could it give any information of the nature and duration of that felicity? The arguments which tend to prove a future state, furnish no evidence of a state of superior blessedness: and accordingly, the pagan philosophers who maintained the immortality of the soul, did not entertain the belief that the generality of mankind would enjoy higher and purer happiness after death; but, on the contrary, were of opinion that their happiness would be greatly diminished.\* The doctrine of future punishment, though they admitted its importance and necessity as imposing a restraint on the passions of mankind, they generally discarded as vain and superstitious.

24. Again: the moral improvement of mankind requires that they should possess information in regard to the *character* of the individuals who are to be exalted to happiness in a future life. In so far as reason would lead us to entertain just notions of the divine character and government, so far might it be expected to lead us to form a proper estimate of the character of the persons whom God shall advance to felicity in another world. But it will be found that if men are left to themselves, without divine revelation, to judge of moral excellence, their opinions of good and evil will be affected by the degrees in which they themselves possess personal worth, by their early habits and dispositions, by their desires and passions, and the prevailing sentiments of their age and country. Even among ourselves, enlightened as we are by revelation, are not some virtues unduly extolled, and others depreciated, according to the fashion of the times? Are not vices condemned by the word of God which men will not bear to be told that they exclude from the kingdom of heaven? If these things take place among Christians, what could be expected from men dwelling in pagan darkness? What might

\* Hence Ulysses is made to declare to Achilles, that he would rather be a slave to a labourer on earth than exercise dominion over the dead.—*Odys.*



we suppose would be their judgment respecting that excellence which God would approve, that character to which he would award the felicity of heaven?

25. Accordingly we find that they seldom fixed on high moral excellence as the great and essential requisite. They supposed future happiness to be bestowed for some service connected with the civil interests of man, and was contemplated rather as an incitement to mental exertion and patriotic action, than the cultivation of good dispositions and habits. Poets and philosophers, heroes and legislators, chiefly peopled the heaven which their imagination feigned; and the great mass of mankind, whose condition precluded them from acts of public greatness, were very much excluded from a share in the happiness of futurity. With regard to them, if they were pious and virtuous persons, Socrates and Plato supposed they went to Elysium and the Islands of the Blessed, but that after a temporary abode there they passed through several transmigrations, and were at length to return to life again in such bodies of men or beasts as were best suited to them, or as they themselves should choose. But both these philosophers give a high idea of the happiness to which persons who applied themselves to the study of philosophy should be raised after their departure hence. Cicero places those who had been serviceable to their country, in preserving and assisting it, and enlarging its dominion, not merely in Elysium, which was only a temporary felicity, but in heaven, where they were to be happy for ever. The Stoics held that the common souls at death, or soon after it, were to be resolved into the universal nature, but that great and eminent ones were to continue to the conflagration, and that some of them should be advanced to the dignity of gods.

26. How little comfort could such prospects afford to the human mind under the fear of guilt, and in the view of dissolution! The notions of the happiness contemplated, mingled as they were with debasing ideas, could have had no purifying influence on the heart. The virtue which was deemed worthy of the reward of heaven was to be of a public nature; and, unlike the purity of heart and life which the gospel declares to be an essential requisite of future happiness, it might be connected with the most gross and degrading vices. To these erroneous views of a future state they added the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, which was adopted not only by



the vulgar, but by the wise and learned. They endeavoured indeed to explain it so as to preserve some appearance of future rewards and punishments, by supposing different kinds of bodies which they were appointed to animate. But in reality, upon this scheme there could be no proper retributions in another life for what was done in the present. For in the several transmigrations from one body to another, the soul was generally supposed to have no remembrance, in a succeeding body, of the actions it had done and the events which had happened to it in a former. Pythagoras, indeed, pretended to remember the several transmigrations he had passed through, and what he had done and what had befallen him in the several bodies he had animated ; but this was represented as a peculiar and extraordinary privilege granted to him by Mercury, and which was not the common case of transmigrated souls.

In order, therefore, to make the doctrine of the transmigration of souls in any way consist with a state of future retributions, it was supposed by some that souls were first to go to Hades, where they were, it was thought, to have a remembrance of their past actions, and to be rewarded or punished accordingly. And when they had continued there for some time, they were to enter into bodies of various kinds, and after a succession of transmigrations, were to return into what was called the universal soul, and to lose their individual subsistence.

27. Hence the necessity of a divine revelation to make known with certainty the reality of a future state of retributions, the character of the persons who should be admitted to eternal happiness, and what was of infinite importance to the comfort and moral improvement of mankind, to render the belief of a future being a permanent principle of action. In order that such belief may purify our souls, and be an abiding incitement to action, it is necessary that it should be incorporated, as it were, with our thoughts and feelings, and influence the tenor of our schemes and pursuits. When we consider the tenacious hold which visible things have of mankind, the indisposition of men to receive spiritual truths, and especially when they oppose their propensities and passions, we must be convinced that our belief of future existence, in order to be influential and practical, must rest upon a basis more stable than speculative opinions. These, indeed, will

scarcely have any effect upon the human mind, amid the busy scenes and occupations of life ; and though the thought of an hereafter will occur in the season of sickness, and in the prospect of dissolution, it will rarely rouse the attention and take hold of the mind in the time of health, and it will never be felt as a directing, controlling, principle of conduct.

28. Philosophers, accordingly, ignorant themselves of the nature of future happiness, and uncertain in regard to its reality, scarcely ever attempted to apply the belief of it to the comfort and the holiness of man. Cicero, while he mentions several arguments in his *Tusculan Questions* in favour of the immortality of the soul, does not derive one word of consolation and support from this doctrine. All terminates in a man's supporting himself by the strength of his own mind, and the force of his virtue ; and, in endeavouring to persuade men that none of the things which are generally accounted good or evil are really good or evil, but are so in opinion only. And when he mentions the several methods of consolation proposed and insisted upon by the philosophers, not the least hint is given of a happier state of existence after this life is at an end. The same observation may be made on his five celebrated books, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*. The design of them is to inquire into the *summum bonum*, the chief happiness of man. But, in this whole inquiry, no notice is taken of a future state. It is all along supposed that man is capable of attaining to a perfect happiness in this present life, and he is never directed to look beyond it to any future recompense, or to expect complete happiness in the world to come.—As to the other use to be made of the doctrine of a future state, for animating men to the practice of virtue, this also had little or no place in their moral systems. They seem to have looked upon this as too uncertain to be relied upon, and therefore endeavoured to find out motives to virtue, independent of the belief of the rewards prepared for good men after this life is at an end. They represented the present conveniences and advantages of virtue, and the satisfaction which attends it ; but especially they insisted on its intrinsic excellency ; its dignity and beauty, and agreeableness to reason and nature, and its self-sufficiency to happiness. Of the life and immortality brought to light by the gospel they were ignorant ; and therefore they attempted not to impress upon the mind a belief of a state of future retribution as a ruling

principle of support under affliction, and of excitement to duty.

29. When, then, we consider, in the first place, the uncertainty of reason in regard to a future life : in the second place, the ignorance of mankind in regard to the existence and the nature of future retributions : in the third place, their want of information respecting the character of the persons who shall be rewarded or punished : and, in the fourth place, the infinite importance of rendering the belief of a future state a permanent principle of action ;—we must be satisfied of the absolute necessity of a divine revelation to the moral improvement and the happiness of mankind. We have therefore the strongest reasons for presuming that the gracious God who does not leave himself without witness in his providence, would make provision for the spiritual necessities of his rational, though erring and helpless offspring.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE ADVANTAGE AND NECESSITY OF DIVINE REVELATION:—THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON IN REGARD TO THE PARDON OF SIN, AND THE MODE OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

1. IF the experience of mankind prove that unassisted reason is insufficient to discover the unity and perfections of God, a divine providence, as that doctrine is taught in the Scriptures, and a future state of rewards and punishments, it is equally certain, that it is altogether incompetent to give information respecting the great and interesting question, Whether God will pardon sin ?

2. Wherever the light of divine revelation has not been enjoyed, and the principles of natural religion have not been altogether obliterated, the inquiry ever has been, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” To this inquiry neither nature nor unassisted reason could give any satisfactory answer. To the man who is alive to the consideration of the reality and awfulness of his condition as guilty before God, and of that final judgment to which he is near, what is there in earth, or

sky, in all that heathen poets ever sung, or philosophers ever taught, to give well-founded peace, or to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" To this momentous interrogation nature gives no response, but leaves the anxious inquirer in doubt and in darkness, to have recourse to those self-mortifications and sacrifices which his fears may suggest as likely to propitiate an offended Deity. Fain would he learn from an infallible authority the way in which man may become just with God; but no gleam of light to direct him appears through that darkness which surrounds him, and there is nothing in all that the voice of nature utters which is applicable to his case.

3. A considerate investigation of the natural course of things will readily discover circumstances which form presumptions against the bestowment of forgiveness. A just consideration of the evil and desert of sin will furnish ground against it. It is true, mankind generally, and especially where the light of revelation is not enjoyed, have very superficial notions of the heinousness of sin. They form to themselves false views of the nature and character of God, of his greatness, holiness, and purity, and imagine that his thoughts of transgression, as they do not materially differ from theirs, will not lead him to deal severely in regard to it. Their inattention to the subject, the occupation of their minds with the business of life, and, in many cases, the continued practice of iniquity, render them insensible to its real nature and consequences. Their system of idolatry and polytheism in pagan nations blinds the judgment, and hardens the heart. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them."

4. But notwithstanding this insensibility, circumstances will occur, even amid the darkness of paganism, to rouse the attention, and to awaken the conscience. Adversity, the loss of friends tenderly beloved, or approaching dissolution, will suggest the thought of a future state, and give rise to the inquiry concerning the forgiveness of sins. In proportion to his impression of the greatness and holiness of God, and of his



obligations to love and serve him, will the conscience of man remind him of the evil of sin, judge and condemn him on account of it, and admonish him of its possible consequences. Were he acquainted with the nature and authority of that eternal law which speaks to him in the name of God, and of which he has been the transgressor, his doubts and fears would be still more increased, as well as his anxiety to ascertain whether there is forgiveness with God, and the way in which it is to be obtained. He is convinced that the supreme and righteous Ruler will make some difference between those who serve God and those who serve him not. This conviction is impressed on his mind by the established course of providence; but then he does not know whether he has served God acceptably, or to what extent he may have done so, while his conscience accuses him of having committed much that must be offensive to a Holy Being. He consults his conscience, however, in vain for information regarding the pardon of sin, for that gives no hope except upon principles which are subversive of the purity and authority of God. Reason and philosophy are equally silent and unsatisfactory when he asks them, Whether it be consistent with the justice, holiness, and wisdom of God to pardon any sin? whether he will pardon many or few sins? what degrees of aggravation in offences will he forgive? whether he will receive offenders into his favour without any vindication of the honour of his laws? Or, if he require satisfaction to his justice, what is the nature of the satisfaction which he requires, and by whom is it to be rendered? Whether he will merely pardon, or, in addition to this, reinstate the sinner into his favour, and treat him as if he had never sinned?

5. These are questions which are far above the reach of man, ignorant, guilty, and partial as he is, to decide upon. He only can solve them who knows what is due to himself and to his government, and who has full comprehension of the deserts of sin. "When the regalia of the great Ruler and Lord of heaven and earth are invaded," to use the words of Howe, "his temple violated, his presence despised, his image torn down thence and defaced, who among the sons of men are either great, or knowing, or innocent enough to judge of the offence and wrong? Or how fit it is that it be remitted without recompense? Or what recompense would be proportionable? How supposable is it that there may be congruities in this

matter, obvious to the divine understanding, which infinitely exceed the measure of ours." But where are the decisions of God in regard to these momentous questions to be found? The works of creation, which proclaim the wisdom and beneficence of God, give no information on these subjects. The dispensations of providence, which afford evidence of the righteousness and forbearance of God, give no intimation of the existence of pardoning mercy, or of the manner in which it is exercised. The consciences of men, which sometimes fill them with alarm, never, without divine revelation, can certify that God has forgiven them.

6. If it be alleged that the infinite goodness of God is manifested by the works of creation and providence, and that his benevolence and placability therein displayed furnish sufficient ground to hope in the divine forgiveness and acceptance, we answer, that unassisted reason, in its most improved state, cannot possibly determine from the goodness of God that pardon will be bestowed on sinful men, unless it can know first what the general good of the universe may require, and what the righteousness of God, as the sovereign Ruler, demands. It may be perfectly consistent with the general good to allow the consequences connected with transgression to take their natural course: and if, notwithstanding the placability of the judge, he must, in his judicial capacity, condemn the criminal, will it follow that the Judge of all, because he is infinitely benevolent, must interpose to remit the guilt of sinners, and to avert their punishment? Could that be real goodness or placability which would be exercised without regard to truth or justice, which would put the guilty on a level with the innocent, and which would oppose the laws of infinite wisdom? But can reason determine by the light of nature that pardoning mercy could be exercised to a single individual of the human race without involving these consequences? Universal experience proves that suffering, which is the effect of sin, is not incompatible with the goodness of God in the present life; and how could it be shown that it is inconsistent with the divine benevolence to allow the sins of all mankind to remain unpardoned in the world to come, and to be productive of that misery which is their natural consequence?

7. Even could reason make the discovery that there is forgiveness with God, it would remain a problem, In regard to whom is it to be exercised? Are all indiscriminately, the

good and the bad, to enjoy its advantage? Or is it to be restricted to those possessed of certain qualifications? Can the nature of these qualifications be pointed out? Among men the proper objects of mercy are not sin and misery, but such sin and misery as it is consistent with the honour and good of the governor, the government, and the governed, to pardon. If it be admitted that this circumstance must be understood as regulating the exercise of the divine mercy to sinners, and that therefore the penitent only can share in the divine forgiveness, still the question remains to be decided, whether repentance alone is sufficient to procure the pardon of sin? and, whether unassisted reason is competent to determine this?

8. This, indeed, has been affirmed. It has been asserted that repentance is the only means which on our part is required for satisfying the divine justice, and returning to the right way of serving God. Supposing this were the case, mankind, conscious of guilt, and apprehensive of its consequences, require more light to assure them of this than what reason affords; for it is one thing to be convinced of the obligation to repentance, that it is absolutely necessary to accompany the application for pardon, and the grant of mercy, by whatever method the pardon is procured; but another to perceive how repentance can be the meritorious cause or ground of its bestowment. Repentance, though genuine, cannot make atonement for former disobedience. It is merely a return to that duty which we were always bound to render, but which, in consequence of our corruptions, we are less able to perform. In itself it neither confers a right to pardon nor presents any circumstances to the view of the sinner himself to deter him from the commission of sin, or to impress others with a just sense of its danger. It is a sorrow flowing chiefly from love to God and a sense of the wrong which has been done to him, accompanied with the endeavour to render to him the obedience to which he is entitled.

9. Whether repentance such as this, implying love and delight in God, can exist in the mind of any person conscious of sin, without an express assurance that God is reconcilable, and ready to forgive, I shall not here stop to inquire. But it may be easily proved that the light of nature does not teach mankind that penitent sinners shall be certainly pardoned. No such information is to be learned from any of the works of

nature, or from the administration of the government of the world. He whose prerogative it is to forgive sin is God only: it is against his authority as the supreme moral Governor it is committed; and though his happiness cannot be impaired by the disaffection of his creatures, his character and glory are intentionally wronged. It is He alone who can say whether the injury done may or will be forgiven, whether the obligation to punishment incurred by transgression will be cancelled; and to Him it exclusively belongs to prescribe the terms on which remission can be granted. But without an express revelation, declaring that all penitent sinners shall be pardoned, how could his will in regard to this subject be known?

10. It would indeed require an explicit declaration from God himself to assure us that the divine government acted upon this principle in regard to mankind, when we know that in human governments no laws could be respected if it were understood that repentance would, in every case, avert the penalty incurred by their violation. What government on earth could long continue if it were provided by law that all offenders, whatever might be the aggravations of their crimes, would in all future time escape punishment if they only repented? Not only are human governments directly at variance with any such maxim, but the whole constitution of nature opposes and contradicts it. In no case can we observe in the common course of things that mere repentance will prevent the suffering connected with sin, or avert its consequences. Wherever nature provides remedies for diseases, these remedies operate irrespectively of the tears and sorrows which may be occasioned by those vices in which the diseases originate.

11. When persons ruin their fortunes by extravagance, and bring diseases on themselves by excess, will sorrow for their past follies, and behaving well for the future, alone and of itself prevent the natural consequences of them? "And though we ought to reason with all reverence, whenever we reason concerning the divine conduct, yet it is clearly contrary to all our notions of government, as well as to what is, in fact, the general constitution of nature, to suppose that doing well for the future should in all cases prevent all the judicial bad consequences of having done evil, or all the punishment annexed to disobedience. Though the efficacy of repentance itself alone, to prevent what mankind had rendered themselves



obnoxious to, and recover what they had forfeited, is now insisted upon, in opposition to Christianity, yet, by the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices over the heathen world, this notion of repentance alone being sufficient to expiate guilt, appears to be contrary to the general sense of mankind." \*

12. Even were we to conceive that it is consistent with the wisdom and righteousness of God to pardon one sinner upon repentance, without any satisfaction to his justice, yet nothing could be apparently more unbecoming him than to establish and promulgate a law by which all who, in any future age of the world, rebelled against his authority, would be freely pardoned if they only repented. If human governments could not act upon this principle, or adopt such procedure, much less, according to our views of consistency and congruity, could the divine; for the pardon granted by an earthly sovereign to a subject has merely the effect of remitting the punishment, and is not followed, in ordinary cases, with any other advantage; but is not that which God bestows accompanied with restoration to his favour, and to greater blessedness than has been forfeited? Can it be supposed that the God of all perfection would deal thus in regard to sinful men without vindicating his rights as the supreme moral Governor of the universe, and without an impressive manifestation of his wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth?

13. But if repentance were the sole ground upon which pardon was obtained, who could tell us to what degree of perfection our penitence must reach before it could be sustained? How very imperfect is that of the generality of mankind, both as it regards the motives whence it originates, and the effects which it produces! How frequently, through the influence of former evil habits and propensities, do they again relapse! When they do backslide, may they again hope for forgiveness? Where, in the whole compass of nature, can they find satisfactory answers to these inquiries? The law originally written on the heart, eternal and unalterable in its obligations, knows nothing of repentance. It whispers peace to the conscience of him who obeys, but pronounces indignation and wrath against every soul of man that doeth evil. And nature, while it holds on its course, and adapts itself to the temporal convenience

\* Butler's Works, vol. i. p. 251.

and comfort of man, by giving him summer and winter, seed-time and harvest;

The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even;  
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,  
And all the dread magnificence of heaven;

but it utters no voice to relieve the troubled conscience, to tell the weary wanderer the way that leads him back to God, to assure him of a glorious immortality, or to answer his inquiry, *Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?* In regard to these momentous concerns it is silent as the grave: all is darkness and the shadow of death.

14. But even though it did afford some faint hope of pardon to the penitent, what means does it provide for subduing and overcoming the corruption of our nature? What is pardon unaccompanied with deliverance from the power and love of sin? Whence are we to obtain those directions, and that divine influence, by which we shall subdue evil habits, eradicate corrupt inclinations, and heartily practise those duties which even nature teaches us are due to God? How or when are we to be relieved from that depravity, the existence of which all confess, the inveteracy of which the wisest and the best have always deplored, and which, like a deadly leprosy, has overspread the nature in all the individuals of the race?

15. Here, again, without the light of divine revelation, we are left in utter ignorance and helplessness. If we look to mankind in the ancient and modern heathen world, we find them neglecting those great purposes which even reason must pronounce to be the chief ends of human existence, alienated from God, walking in direct contradiction to his law, and filled with all unrighteousness. In proportion as the darkness increased, did they become reconciled to it, till at length they became so debased by moral pollution, as to live without God and without hope in the world. They either were insensible of their guilt and corruption, or they tried all the means that fear and superstition could suggest for their removal,—not sparing the most costly sacrifices, laborious services, and painful bodily inflictions, and even giving the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. With this anxiety to secure some ground to trust upon for futurity, was connected great spiritual

blindness,—an ignorance so great, that they could not clearly discover the rule of moral obligation, but substituted evil for good and bitter for sweet, and gave ample evidence that the seeds of wickedness are abundant in the human heart. The character of the generality of them is faithfully depicted when it is declared, that they were full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.\*

16. What did the philosophers, those masters of reason, do to stem this torrent of corruption? What doctrines did they teach, and what directions did they prescribe, by which the people might be delivered from this load of guilt and depravity? We may rather ask, what superstitious rite did they not encourage, and what immoral practice did they not countenance by their conduct? In place of aiding sinful men in ascertaining their actual condition before God, the way in which their sins might be pardoned, the means by which their nature might be renovated, and the reality of an immortal life beyond the grave, they amused them with vague and contradictory opinions, and gave the sanction of their authority to their grossest errors, and to their vilest abominations. They taught it to be a duty to comply with the established system of idolatry and polytheism; even the best of them had false notions of the worship which is due to God, and of the rule of moral obligation in regard to man; and, notwithstanding the gleanings of moral sentiments which are occasionally to be found in their writings, they countenanced by their principles and practice crimes opposed to the dictates of humanity, and vices to which allusion cannot be made among Christians. Was it by such instructors that the world was to be enlightened, that mankind were to be reclaimed from ignorance and depravity, that they were to be furnished with motives and examples of purer religion and virtue,—that they were to be made holy and happy in the sure and certain hope of enjoying higher felicity in another world? How helpless and hopeless would have remained their condition if their restoration to holiness, to happiness, and to God, had depended on the discoveries and the counsels of such guides! Philosophy had ample room for the exertion of her powers, and for trying

\* Rom. i. 24—32.

her influence in enlightening the human mind, and in improving the nature of man; but her utter impotency for these purposes was loudly proclaimed by the idolatry, polytheism, depravity, and moral darkness, that notwithstanding prevailed over the earth. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" In an age more refined than any that preceded it, when learned men and philosophical sects were numerous and powerful, when men in all ranks and offices who pretended to superiority of knowledge, whether in the schools, the magistracy, the army, or on the throne;—it was in such an age that depravity was spread over the world like a mighty torrent, that darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Even the lights of reason and of nature were obscured amid the general gloom; and, dimly reflected, were sufficient to show the ruin of our race, without affording certain knowledge of their origin and their destiny.

17. In this hapless condition, from what quarter was deliverance to come to mankind? If their own efforts were ineffectual to rise superior to the ignorance and vice which had long acquired dominion over them:—if their rulers universally enjoined obedience to the laws by which idolatry and polytheism had been established:—if the priesthood deemed it no part of their duty to inculcate morals, but merely the observance of superstitious and cruel rites:—if their philosophers, the wisest and the best of them, in their ignorance, sanctioned the worship of many gods, furnished no rule of moral obligation, and no example that could be safely followed,—then, without the direct interposition of God, to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the forgiveness of sins, they must have continued for ever the victims of ignorance, error, and depravity.

18. We obtain additional evidence of the absolute certainty of this fact, if we glance at the conduct of those who have been favoured with divine revelation. How prone were the Jews who enjoyed this advantage to decline from the worship of the One True God into idolatry, and to adopt the impious, cruel, and licentious practices of their neighbours! It required continual and extraordinary efforts to prevent the lamp of truth from being extinguished in the midst of that people. In more recent times, the impurities of paganism, and the worldliness and insensibility of the Jews, clearly as they



demonstrate the corruption of human nature, are surpassed as evidence of this fact, in the opposition which has been given to the light of the gospel. A few centuries after its first diffusion, mankind embraced gross delusions, united to the worship of God that of angels and saints, and revived the superstitious and idolatrous rites of heathenism. The fact is indeed humbling, but it is not the less true, that the corruption of human nature, unless counteracted and subdued by an influence from above, is diffusive and perpetual; that it often turns to no account the best-devised efforts of the Christian and the Christian patriot, to ensure to their posterity, and to their native land, the blessings of heavenly knowledge; that it thus continues to go on accumulating its force, and where a mightier power does not interpose, sweeps before it all that makes man like Him that made him, and attests by its progress the truth of the declaration, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

19. The disease is without a remedy unless it were provided by God. No deliverance from this spiritual malady has ever proceeded from any nation or people: and in no single instance have they emerged themselves from pagan blindness and pollution. While the Greeks and Romans excelled in science, in arts, and in arms; while they surpassed other nations in the knowledge of government and civil polity; while their philosophers equalled in talents and genius those of any other age or country of the world;—they continued the worshippers of innumerable gods, sunk deeper and deeper into the gross fooleries and impurities of heathenism, until at length, when our Lord appeared, they exhibited the most perfect demonstration of the impotency of unassisted reason in regard to religion, the blindness of the human mind, and the corruption of human nature. A deceived heart had turned them aside, that they could not deliver their souls, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? “Have we not then had full experiment of our natural powers? Lost as men were, at the time Christ appeared, to all sense of true religion, lost as they must be to it, at all times, when left to a proud confidence in their own sufficiency, nothing short of a strong and salutary terror could awaken them to virtue. Without some striking expression of God’s abhorrence of sin, which might work powerfully on the imagination and on the heart, what could prove a sufficient counteraction to the violent impulse of natural passions, what

to the entailed depravation, which the history of man, no less than the voice of revelation, pronounces to have infected the whole human race?"—*Magee on the Atonement*, vol. i. p. 15.

20. It is proved by the history of the world, that mankind, if left to themselves, however good their natural abilities, will never help themselves to the attainment of religious knowledge and of moral purity. Unless these blessings are provided for them, the darkness and corruption by which they are held will continue as long as the race. Their condition is as hopeless as it is helpless, in so far as they themselves are to work out their deliverance. Let the light of divine knowledge be extinguished among any people, and it can only be rekindled by fire from heaven. They may advance in civilization and learning; they may succeed in establishing among them the institutions of a free and intellectual people: but they will make no progress towards the attainment of the knowledge of God, and towards a holy surrender of themselves to his service.

21. But while we are convinced of the natural helplessness of mankind in regard to the great concerns of eternity, how cheering the thought that the provision which their necessities required has been made by God, who has graciously interposed to give the knowledge of salvation to his erring and guilty creatures by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. To all who are burdened with guilt, and who have serious thoughts of God, the proclamation of the great Ruler of earth and heaven, The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,—this proclamation furnishes a stable ground on which to rest their hopes of pardon and of divine acceptance. The darkness which had intervened between us and the throne of God is dispelled; the doubts, fears, and apprehensions, by which we were held in bondage, are removed; and we are permitted to view without a cloud the infinite kindness and love of that God who pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy.

22. In contrast with the darkness of nature, behold the brightness of the light of the gospel. That clearly makes known to us that God has devised a plan by which mercy, in consistency with his justice, may be extended to sinful men;

—that God has so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;—that, in pursuance of this gracious purpose, Jesus Christ assumed human nature, voluntarily made himself an expiatory sacrifice for sin, and has, by his atonement, saved all who become his disciples from its guilt and from its consequences;—that he has procured divine influence, by which to renew our nature after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, to enable us to subdue sin and to gain the mastery over it, to discharge the duties and to bear the trials of life, and to make us meet for entering on the glories and felicity of eternity. The revelation which God has given discovers to us his character as the God of all grace and of all comfort, as the Father and the Friend of his erring and helpless offspring: it makes known to us the condescension and the compassion of that divine person who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich:—it assures us that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and it invites the weary, the wandering, and the heavy laden, to that compassionate and all-powerful Redeemer, who will not cast off any who come to him. This is the knowledge with which purity, and hope, and happiness, are connected; which creates new views, principles, and desires, in the soul of man; which raises him to the possession and enjoyment of more than sin had forfeited;—which gives him ground to say, when the heavens are no more, and when the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up, that he has lost nothing, and that his felicity and his existence are alike immortal.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE REVELATION SHOWN FROM THE AVOWED MORAL PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTERS OF DEISTS.

1. IF we are able to prove, that there is a natural connexion between a disbelief in the book which Christians receive as a divine revelation, and the disbelief of religion in general,—that deism has led and inevitably tends to lead to atheism and irreligion,—we are furnished with an argument of great strength for the necessity of a revelation of the will of God. If it can be shown, that men of the greatest talents, when they renounce the aid and guidance of revelation, cease, at the same time, to be under the influence of the principles of natural religion, I

think, we demonstrate that an authoritative communication from heaven is essential to the moral well-being of man.

2. (I.) In proof of our position, we refer to the authentic account of the deistical system which has been given by deists themselves, and which is contained in their writings.

The term deist, as applied to those who reject revealed religion, was first assumed about the middle of the sixteenth century, by some gentlemen in France and Italy, with the view of covering their opposition to Christianity by a softer name than that of atheists. According to Viret, they professed to believe in God, but considered the doctrine of the apostles as fables and dreams. While, however, they *professed* to admit the existence of a God, and even the immortality of the soul, they nevertheless laughed at all religion. That which properly characterises deists is, that they reject all revealed religion, and discard all pretences to it, as imposture or enthusiasm. They profess a regard for natural religion; but they are far from being agreed in their notions of it. Their most eminent modern writers seem to be very easy about these differences. With them all are true deists who oppose revelation, whether they own future rewards and punishments or not.\*

3. One of the votaries of deism, Lord Edward Herbert, of Cherbury, who lived in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, was one of the first who formed deism into a system,—a system, however, which he partly borrowed from the Scriptures,—though with the view of discarding all revelation he affirmed the universality, sufficiency, and absolute perfection of natural religion. This religion, which he maintained is universal, though he derived it from Scripture, he regarded as comprehending the five following articles; namely, that there is one God,—that he is to be worshipped,—that his worship chiefly consists in piety and virtue,—that repentance secures the pardon of sin,—that there is a future state of rewards and punishment. But this scheme of natural religion, which its author employed for giving a deadlier blow to Christianity, met with little countenance from deists. They have regarded a belief in it as inconsistent with perfect freedom of opinion and action. They expunge an attribute from the character of God; or they contend against the belief of his government of the world; or they blot out immortality from the record of human hopes; or they reduce it, from being the great scene of moral retribution,

\* Viret, Bayle's Dictionary. Leland's View, &c. vol. i. p. 2, &c.



to a mere picture of the fancy,—they do this not only without one sigh of regret, and without one feeling of compunction, but with as much coolness as they would rectify an error in the most common transactions of life.

4. Halyburton has ably refuted the assumptions of Lord Herbert; and has demonstrated in his elaborate performance, by a full consideration of all the particulars comprehended in this scheme of natural religion, the necessity of revelation to the virtue and happiness of man. But even this father of modern deism, the most respectable of his class, by maintaining principles opposed to morality,—by declaring that the indulgence of lust and anger is no more to be blamed than the thirst occasioned by the dropsy,—has proved the utter inadequacy and inefficiency of every system short of a revelation of the will of God, as a directory in religion and morals.\*

5. The same remark applies to another deist of eminence, who, in the order of time, is next to Lord Herbert of Cherbury,—I mean Hobbes. The writings of this author, no one of which was professedly levelled against revealed religion, have rarely been equalled in their influence in diffusing irreligion and infidelity. Few writers of this school afford a more impressive illustration of our position than Hobbes, namely, that the man who rejects revelation on the alleged ground of the sufficiency of natural religion, is really the enemy of both. He endeavours to undermine the authority of Scripture,—then to sap the foundations of all religion,—and to produce in the minds of his readers the feeling of universal scepticism. His scheme strikes at the foundation of all religion, both natural and revealed; tends, not only to subvert the authority of Scripture, but to destroy God's moral administration; confounds the natural differences of good and evil, virtue and vice, and takes away the distinction between soul and body, and the liberty of human actions; destroys the best principles of human nature, and, instead of that inward benevolence and social disposition which should unite men together, supposes all men to be naturally in a state of war with one another; erects an absolute tyranny in the state and church, and makes the will of the prince the sole standard of right and wrong; and completes the degradation of man by depriving him of the rights of conscience.

6. Mr. Charles Blount, who, in 1680, published a translation of the first two books of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*

\* Halyburton's *Necessity of Divine Revelation*.

Tyanæus, with large notes, is the next votary of deism to whom we shall refer. Students of church history need not be told that Apollonius was a Pythagorean philosopher who lived in the first century, whose character and miracles were opposed by the pagans to those of our Lord Jesus Christ. Modern deists have been fond of running a parallel between the one and the other, with the view of showing that the miracles of both rest upon the same foundation;—wilfully suppressing the fact, that the wonders said to have been wrought by Apollonius tended to uphold that reigning superstition over which Christianity triumphed. The *Oracles of Reason* was another of Blount's writings, published after his unhappy end, and designed to oppose revelation, and in particular the Mosaic record. The publisher of this work, Mr. Gildon, was afterwards convinced of his error, and wrote the *Deist's Manual*, in which he vindicates the doctrines of the existence and attributes of God, his providence and government of the world, the immortality of the soul, and a future state; and he assigns as his reason, that many of the deists with whom he was acquainted denied these great principles which lie at the foundation of all religion.

7. Next to Blount in the service of infidelity was Mr. Toland, a man who, under the profession of Christianity, made it the great business of his life to oppose it. The work by which he is distinguished, entitled *Amyntor*, published in 1698, is marked by the endeavour of the author to invalidate the canon of the New Testament. With this view, he has collected together all the observations he could find relating to the spurious gospels, and pretended sacred books which appeared in the early ages of the Christian Church. He has represented these apocryphal writings as of equal authority with the four Gospels, and the other books of the New Testament; and that the latter are not deserving of greater credit, nor more to be relied upon than the former. The misrepresentation and sophistry of Toland have been ably exposed by Jones in his treatise on the Canon, and by Lardner in his *Credibility of the Gospel History*.

8. I pass by the Earl of Shaftesbury, who, with seeming respect for divine revelation, treats it with real contempt,—who professes to be an admirer of virtue, that he may the more effectually undermine religion.

Early in the eighteenth century, Anthony Collins appeared in support of deism. His discourse on freethinking was fol-

lowed, in 1744, by his discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion. In this treatise he maintains, that our Lord and his apostles rested the proof of Christianity on the prophecies of the Old Testament;—that if these proofs are valid, Christianity is established on its true foundation; but if they are invalid, and the arguments brought from thence be not conclusive, and the prophecies cited from thence be not fulfilled, Christianity has no just foundation, and is therefore false. In order to establish this conclusion, he alleges, that the prophecies cited in the New Testament from the Old, in proof of Christianity, are only typical and allegorical proofs, and, therefore, in reality, are no proofs at all, inasmuch as the interpretation thus put on the Jewish books by the apostles was a new interpretation, which was not agreeable to the obvious and literal meaning of those books, and was contrary to the sense of the Jewish nation. They rested, as this writer alleged, the entire proof of the religion of Christ on pretended Jewish prophecies, applied in a sense which had no foundation in the prophecies themselves, and contrary to the original meaning and design of those prophecies; and as the proof of Christianity has no ground for its support, the religion of which it is the seal has no evidence to authenticate its divine authority.

9. It required not the talents of the two Chandlers, of Dr. Sykes, of Whiston, and of Sherlock, to expose the falsehood of this scheme, or to remind the world, that Revealed Religion has from the beginning been supported by miracles as well as by prophecy; and that there are in the Old Testament numerous prophecies which directly refer to the glory, the advent, the atoning death, and kingdom of the Messiah.

10. Collins was followed by Woolston, who, under pretence of acting the part of Moderator in the controversy, endeavoured to allegorize away the miracles of our Saviour, as his predecessor had done the prophecies. There are two ways in which he endeavours to attain his design,—the one, by showing that the literal sense of our Saviour's miracles is denied by the most ancient and venerable writers of the Christian Church;—the other is, by showing the absurdity of the accounts given in the Gospels, taken in the literal sense.

It was scarcely necessary to have given an answer to assertions such as these, founded as they are in ignorance and gross misrepresentation. They were, however, answered with ability and learning by Dr. Gibson, bishop of London, Dr. Pearce,

bishop of Rochester, and others ; but particularly by Dr. Lardner in his *Vindication of the Miracles of our blessed Saviour*. The abuse of Woolston produced universal disgust and indignation.

11. But his successor in the cause of infidelity was more artful and plausible. This was Dr. Tindal ; who, in the year 1730, published a work entitled, *Christianity as old as the Creation, or, the Gospel a Republication of the Law of Nature*. Under pretended regard to Christianity, his design was to undermine and destroy the authority of Revealed Religion, and to represent the light of nature as sufficient for the direction and happiness of man. This end he has endeavoured to obtain by showing, that there neither is nor can be any external revelation at all distinct from what he calls the internal revelation of the law of nature in the hearts of all mankind ; that such external revelation is needless and useless ; that the original law and religion of nature is so perfect, that nothing can possibly be added to it by any subsequent revelation whatever ; nor can God himself lay any new commands upon us additional to the immutable law of nature. As the religion and law of nature are absolutely perfect, so they always were and are clear to mankind, even to those of the meanest capacity ;—so clear, that it is impossible to be rendered more plain to any man by any external revelation ; and therefore all pretences to such revelation are to be regarded as proceeding from enthusiasm and imposture.

This treatise on Deism was answered by Dr. Thomas Burnet, —by Dr. Waterland in his *Scripture Vindicated*,—by Mr. Law in his *Natural Religion* fairly and fully stated,—and by several other eminent writers.

12. After Dr. Tindal, and in support of the same cause, Dr. Morgan published a work in 1737, entitled, *The Moral Philosopher*. Under fair pretences and disguises, he has covered determined malice against the authority of the Christian Revelation. The great principle which pervades his book is, that there is but one certain and infallible mark or criterion of divine truth, and that is the reason or the fitness of the thing itself, when considered by the understanding. Accordingly, he will not allow either miracles or prophecy to be any proof of divine revelation, or any reason at all for our believing any doctrine, or submitting to any laws, which have this attestation given to them. He discards all authority in matters of religion, and represents the receiving of anything purely upon such autho-



rity as a renouncing of our reason. According to him, the only way any man, even of the meanest capacity, can have to be fully assured of the truth of any doctrine in religion, is by the reason of the thing, or its own intrinsic evidence, independent of all authority or testimony; and in like manner, with regard to practice, the only way any man has of knowing anything to be his duty, is its being conducive to his own happiness,—a circumstance of which every man is to judge for himself.

This attack on Divine Revelation was ably repelled by Dr. Chapman, in his work entitled, *The true Christian's Defence*; and by Dr. Lelland in his treatise on the *Divine Authority of the Old and New Testaments*. In reading the work of Morgan, we are struck with the falsehood and utter want of the moral principle of the author. While he professes respect for natural religion, he shows himself to be void of all religion.

13. In the year 1744, a pamphlet was published in London, entitled, *The Resurrection of Jesus considered*, in which the author undertakes to prove, that Christ did not foretell his death and resurrection, and that the evidence of the reality of that event is incomplete. I notice this infidel pamphlet merely for the purpose of adverting to one of the ablest defences of Christianity ever written, published in answer to this attack on the foundation of Revealed Religion;—I refer to *Observations on the History and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, by Gilbert West, Esq. The proofs of the resurrection of Christ he classes under four heads: 1st, The testimony of those that had seen him after he was risen. 2dly, The evidence of their own senses. 3dly, The accomplishment of the words he had spoken to them while he was yet with them. And, 4thly, The fulfilling of the things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him. He concludes by observing, that there never was any fact more fully proved than the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and that those who were appointed to be the witnesses of it had every kind of proof that the most scrupulous could demand, or the most incredulous imagine.

Another much and justly admired treatise in defence of Christianity, which appeared in 1747, was Lord Littleton's *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*. This is an invaluable work, and is distinguished by this excellency, that it has brought the evidences of Christianity to one point of view.

14. I shall take no farther notice of Mr. Chubb's posthumous works than to say, that, like all the assailants of Divine Revelation, he has endeavoured to weaken the influence, and destroy the authority, of some of the most important principles of Natural Religion. With scarcely an exception, all who have rejected the Scriptures, have avowed opinions hostile to the religion of nature, and which indicated a total departure from the Living God. They attacked Christianity under the plea that Natural Religion is sufficient, and that Revealed is unnecessary; but in conducting this attack they have avowed opinions which are subversive of all religion.

15. In the year 1750, Mr. Hume, the ablest of the deistical writers, published his Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding. I shall consider at length his views, developed in his Essay on Miracles, in the following book. His opposition to Christianity was bitter and persevering. But, like all who have rejected Revealed Religion, he has exerted his talents in endeavouring to efface every religious impression from the human mind. In these essays he makes the attempt to subvert the evidence for the existence of God: he asserts that it is wrong to ascribe any perfection to him: he denies his superintending government of the world: or, that there shall be rewards and punishments in a future state. Did he renounce Natural Religion before he appeared as the enemy of Revealed, or did his opposition to Revealed Religion lead him to repudiate religion of every kind?

16. But Lord Bolingbroke, for the virulent contempt with which he has treated sacred things, and for his open attacks upon natural as well as revealed religion, is distinguished even among deistical writers. The language which he employs in reference to the Scriptures is coarse and offensive in the extreme. While he seems to admit the existence of a Supreme Being, the great First Cause and Original of all things, he maintains that we are not to ascribe to him moral attributes, such as holiness, justice, and goodness; and that to pretend to deduce moral obligations from those attributes, or to talk of imitating God in his moral attributes, is enthusiasm or blasphemy. While he allows that God made the world, and established the laws of this system at the beginning, he asserts that he does not concern himself in the affairs of men, nor has regard to individuals, to their actions, or to the events that befall them. He maintains that the soul is not a distinct substance from the

body, and that the whole man is dissolved at death. He renounces all religion, natural or revealed, and releases man from all moral restraint and responsibility.

17. Thus we find that modern infidels, who have derived from Scripture all the defensible moral tenets of their system, have avowed principles, not accidentally, but deliberately, when acting the part of instructors of mankind, which are subversive of natural religion as much as revealed. We have seen that Lord Herbert, the purest of them all, maintained, that the commission of sin in certain cases is not to be condemned,—that Hobbes taught that worship is due to God, but, at the same time, that all religion is ridiculous; that man is a mere machine, irresponsible to a supreme moral governor for his conduct; and that his soul is mortal and perishes with the body. We have seen that Blount has declared that there is One God, but that probably the world was not created, but eternal,—that prayer is not a duty,—and that the soul is material and mortal. Lord Shaftesbury declares, that the belief of future rewards and punishments is hostile to virtue, and takes away all motives to it; and that atheism has no direct natural tendency to take away a just sense of right and wrong. Mr. Collins maintained, that man is a mere machine, and that the soul is material and mortal. Tindal taught, that nearly all mankind have been ignorant of God and of natural religion, and yet, that natural religion is so plain to all, even the most ignorant men, that God could not make it plainer. It is unnecessary to repeat the atheistical principles avowed and inculcated by Chubb, Hume, and Bolingbroke,—principles immoral and licentious, and which reduce man to a level with the beasts that perish. After they had taught, that if there be a God, the evidence for whose existence they have attempted to invalidate, he takes no concern in the affairs of men,—after they had by elaborate reasonings restricted the views and hopes of man to this fleeting scene, they recommended pride and vanity as virtues, and maintained that adultery and suicide are no crimes.

18. Now, the conclusion which I deduce from this induction is, that as the rejection of divine revelation leads to the rejection of all religion,—natural as well as revealed, a revelation of the will of God is absolutely necessary for the instruction, the moral improvement, and the happiness of mankind. If men of the greatest genius and talents, when they profess to fall back upon natural religion, and maintain its sufficiency to

the exclusion of all supernatural aid, are invariably found to adopt principles opposed to all religion, have we not the best ground for concluding that a revelation of the will of God, and the cordial reception of that revelation, are essential to the spiritual illumination and moral improvement of man? If religion of some kind be necessary to the existence of society, and the welfare of the human race, then experience proves, that without Revealed Religion there can be none. In whatever way we may feel disposed to account for it, the fact is unquestionable, that men who repudiate the Bible, under whatever pretence, reject at the same time the principles of natural religion, and really adopt atheism. In proof of the same position, I observe,—

19. (II.) That infidelity is productive of, and connected with, irreligion and immorality. We have never found that its votaries have practised the duties of that natural religion, the sufficiency of which they extol, nor given public worship to that God whose existence some of them have not disowned. On the contrary, they have been characterised by discarding all religious feelings and moral restraints. “To say that a man is an infidel, is to say proverbially, that he is destitute of all moral excellence both in principle and practice. This phraseology has grown into use merely from the conduct of infidels, as observed by the common eye of mankind.”

When we consider the principles which they have avowed, and which they hold, how could the case be otherwise? Do not the opinions of men, and especially their opinions on morals and religion, invariably influence and form their character? If there be a few individuals who are externally more decent than the tendency of their doctrines would lead us to believe, they form an exception to the rule. If men deliberately teach, like Lord Herbert, that the indulgence of lust and anger is no more to be blamed than the thirst of a fever; or, like Hobbes, that every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them if he can; or, like Tindal, that every man must form a rule of morals for himself; or, like Shaftesbury, Hume, and Bolingbroke, and many others, that all religion is ridiculous; that there is no superintending providence, no supreme moral government, no criminality in real vice, no excellency in real virtue, and no future state of rewards and punishments,—can we believe that men holding and teaching these and such doctrines will in their own character be truly virtuous?

20. It has often been said, indeed, that a man may be



virtuous whatever be his belief,—that, in regard to his conduct, his creed is of no importance. It ill becomes infidel writers to advance this opinion, since their zeal in labouring to destroy the faith of Christians, and to establish their own, shows their conviction of the falsehood of the declaration. The assertion, however, is not true. “The man who seriously believes in the rectitude of lying, cruelty, fraud, lewdness, and impiety, cannot be virtuous. The man who is pleased with error is, in the exercise of that emotion, guilty. To love the means of vice, or sin, is the same thing in a moral view as to love sin. Error is the certain means of sin in every sense. The man who devises, publishes, and with ingenuity defends it, is therefore the common enemy of God and mankind. To the evil which he does to the universe, no bounds can be fixed; and with all this evil he is chargeable. The ravages of Alexander were probably less injurious to the human race, and less guilty before God, than the ravages of the moral world by Hume or Voltaire.”

21. What was the moral conduct of the men to whose avowed opinions we have referred as hostile to natural as well as revealed religion? Some of them acted with base hypocrisy in professing reverence for Christianity, while they employed every effort which they could command to destroy it. Some of them were infamous for their vice and total want of principle. The work entitled *Leviathan* was written by Hobbes, as he himself declared, to advance the interest of Charles I.; but when he found that the cause of that monarch declined, he changed, and supported the government of Cromwell. This was the natural effect of the principles he had taught, namely, that a man who believes in Christ in his heart may lawfully deny him before the magistrate: that civil or municipal law is the only standard of right and wrong, and that the ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth or justice to his subjects. The morals of Morgan, Voltaire, and Rousseau, are well known, and require no comment. Nor is it necessary to inform the reader, that Hume spent the day preceding his death in affected unconcern as to his nearness to eternity.

22. Is the case reversed among infidels of a less educated class? In regard to them, is it not manifest, that when they threw off the restraint of revealed religion, they threw off the restraints of natural religion? They, like their more learned brethren, disliked revealed religion because it prohibits, under the most awful sanctions, profaneness, injustice, falsehood,

cruelty, incontinence, intemperance, strife, revenge, and oppression, and therefore they renounced it. But, throwing off Christianity on such grounds, how could they continue to submit to the yoke of natural religion, which recognises an almighty and all-perfect Being as sitting on the throne of the universe, whose will, in as far as that can be ascertained, must be regarded as an authoritative rule of conduct to us, and whose holy and righteous decision will hereafter fix our eternal destiny? Having rejected Christianity because they disliked its precepts, and prohibitions, and sanctions, what refuge, what solace, could they find in natural religion, which demands, in as far as its voice can be distinctly heard, the virtues of piety, justice, truth, purity, and mercy? They found that they had none, and therefore they at first doubted, then denied its truth, and speedily cast off all religious restraints.

23. But if infidelity and irreligion are thus found so closely allied, that we almost invariably observe them to be conjoined, we are prepared to expect that immorality will form a part in the combination. If the depravity of human nature sometimes breaks through those barriers which a deep and sincere belief in the truth of revealed religion opposes to its operation, how surely will it flow from the hearts of those who have ceased to feel any check from religious considerations, and who have cast off the fear of the Lord!

Accordingly, moral obligations will be violated when temptations to do so are presented. The duties of life will be neglected whenever their worldly interests interfere with them; and even health, reputation, and fortune, will be sacrificed to the momentary pleasures of sin. When you look to individuals, to families, to districts, to nations, that are deeply tinctured with infidelity, do not you find it accompanied with profligacy and crime? From what you have witnessed in such cases, would you not feel yourself warranted to conclude, that irreligion and immorality have a natural connexion with each other among the bulk of mankind? If you wished to encourage virtue, would you not deem it advisable to cherish a sense of religion; or is there anything else, which, for that purpose, you would substitute in its place? When you see an infidel indulging in licentiousness and sin, is it not the remark which you uniformly make, that his practice is exactly what might have been expected from his principles? Is it not notorious and undeniable, that a great proportion of our unbelievers have

become so, and continue so, not because they have reasoned themselves into infidelity, but because their deeds are evil? Because they are desirous or resolved to live at large, and cannot do so with any consistency or with any freedom while the impression of a holy God and of a coming judgment are still reigning in their minds? Because they wish to have an apology for their past transgressions, and to have a warrant for future delinquency, and can find these nowhere but in the system they have fled to, which allows its votaries to act without control, and to sin without remorse? Is there not in all this a most decisive proof that infidelity is essentially and necessarily hostile to moral virtue, and to everything by which it may be secured and promoted in the world?\*

24. (III.) The objections which have been urged against a divine revelation prove that infidelity is hostile to religion and morality. These objections will be found to militate as strongly against natural as against revealed religion; and are we not therefore entitled to conclude, that those who advance them are opposed to all religion?

This is not the place to consider these objections in detail: an answer will be found to them in another part of this work. In the meantime, we may remark, that if revelation be objected to on the ground of its being mysterious, natural religion may be impugned for the same reason. For what article of the religion of nature does not contain mysteries? If revelation be objected to on the ground of its not being universal, is not natural religion liable to the same objection? How many thousands of years have passed away without its being discovered and practised by a single tribe on the face of the earth? It may truly be said in reference to it, as well as in regard to the doctrines of a clearer faith, that during many ages darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.

25. I am not aware of a single objection that can be brought against revelation, merely on the ground of its being a revelation, which may not with equal propriety be urged against the religion of nature. Is it unwarrantable, therefore, to conclude that the objector is prepared to go all the length which consistency requires him to go, that is, to renounce religion altogether? Are we doing him justice, or acting uncharitably, in supposing that his opposition to Christianity springs from opposition to all religion? We cannot think so, when we

\* Thomson's Sermons on Infidelity.

advert to the avowed opinions, and the undeniable practice of the great majority of infidels, in connexion with the arguments which they urge against a revelation of the will of God.

26. Now, our argument is this:—When we find the deliberate opinions, the general practice, and the objections of deists to a divine revelation, all opposed even to natural religion and morality; when we find that if all men were to adopt their views, and imitate their conduct, the whole race would soon be reduced to a state of savage barbarism; and when we find that this result would inevitably follow, notwithstanding the talents and acquirements of some of the advocates of infidelity, we are forced to the conclusion, that revealed religion is the only preventive to the irreligion, immorality, and misery of mankind, and that therefore revealed religion is absolutely necessary to our well-being both in this life and in that which is to come.

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## CHAPTER VI.

ON THE SUPPOSED PRESUMPTIONS AGAINST A REVELATION ON THE GROUND OF ITS BEING MIRACULOUS.

1. A DIVINE REVELATION necessarily implies what is miraculous; but it is supposed that there is some peculiar presumption from the analogy of nature against miracles. In reply to this seeming objection, I remark,—

2. (I.) There can be no presumption against a revelation of the will of God having been given at the beginning of the world; for a miracle presupposes, and has relation to, an established course of nature, and implies a deviation from a known and uniform order of operation. But, in the beginning of the world, no such established course or order of nature was in existence. It was therefore no deviation from any settled constitution of things in the Deity to give a direct revelation of himself and of his will to the first parents of our race. In such an interposition there was, properly speaking, nothing miraculous; and such an interposition, according to the declaration of the Bible, did take place in regard to the first man. Nor will it be denied, that we learn from the same authority, that a revelation which was thus begun at the earliest period, was repeated from time to time in successive ages of the world, till the period when the books which are contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were completed.



3. Now, on the supposition that these Scriptures are a revelation of the will of God, is not the mode in which they have been thus progressively communicated suited to our conceptions of the wisdom and goodness of God? And was not this the mode that was most adapted to the wants and the circumstances of man? The Deity, in forming the constitution of our world, would embrace this as a part of his great plan; and those frequently occurring dispensations which took place from the beginning of the world till the fulness of time, which we regard as deviations from the course of nature, were really included in the vast scheme of God's government of the world. "There does not appear the least intimation in history or tradition, that religion was first reasoned out; but the whole of history and tradition makes for the other side, that it came into the world by revelation. Indeed, the state of religion in the first ages, of which we have any account, seems to suppose and imply that this was the original of it among mankind. And these reflections together, without taking in the peculiar authority of Scripture, amount to a real and very material degree of evidence, that there was a revelation at the beginning of the world. Now, this has a tendency to remove any prejudices against a subsequent revelation." \*

4. (II.) There is no such presumption against miracles wrought during a continuance of a course of nature as to render them in any way incredible, because, in the first place, there may have been reasons and circumstances which warranted and required a miraculous interposition, or a deviation from the course of nature. When we take religion into view, we know that such reasons and circumstances did exist, and that the magnitude of the moral and religious interests which were at stake rendered it highly desirable, and even necessary, that God should interpose in an extraordinary way. On what ground can we suppose that such miraculous interpositions did not form a part of the original plan of things? But, in the second place, a miracle is a fact or operation which comes under the cognizance of the senses, and is as capable of proof as any other fact or operation. The witnesses, in this case, testify what they have observed. And on what other principle does the theist, who, from his observation of the ordinary phenomena of nature and providence, believes that he sees the proofs of wisdom and design in the universe, infer the existence of God?

\* Butler.

It was from *observing* the miracles of Christ that those who witnessed them inferred the truth of his mission and of his doctrine; and it is from an observation of the operations of nature in her established constitution, that we infer the existence of an almighty and intelligent Being, the creator of all things. "Upon all this I conclude," says Butler, "that there certainly is no such presumption against miracles as to render them in any way incredible; that, on the contrary, our being able to discern reasons for them, gives a positive credibility to the history of them in cases where those reasons hold."

5. (III.) It is no presumption against miracles that they are not witnessed by the greater number of those who believe the system which they are intended to support, because, in the first place, the doctrines of natural religion must be established chiefly by facts admitted on the evidence of testimony. Which of these doctrines, if we except the existence and power of God, can be proved without having recourse far more to the researches and experiments of others than to the phenomena which we have actually observed? Natural religion is, in this respect, much on the same footing as revealed; but, in the second place, the miracles which support divine revelation are still, in some instances, as much the objects of immediate observation as any appearance whatever in the natural world. The present state of the Jews, minutely foretold three thousand years ago, proves, not only that the prophet was divine who predicted it, but that there is a miraculous interposition of the power and agency of God actually presented to our view in the preservation of this wonderful people. Here all who will look to the prediction, and to the fact in which it is fulfilled, have the evidence of their senses for the existence of miraculous interposition.

"We do not think it is going too far to say, that the process of induction in the case of Christianity is much simpler, and much less liable to mistake, and much better fitted for issuing in unequivocal results, than the process of induction which must be gone through in the case of natural religion. The general foundation of our reasoning is the same. We have testimony and observation for the miraculous facts which are adduced in favour of Christianity; and we have testimony and observation for the ordinary facts on which natural religion is built. But miracles, from their very nature, carry a much

readier, and clearer, and more irresistible conviction to the mind than ordinary facts can possibly do. In the latter case the argument is much more abstruse than it needs to be in the former. And when we have once established the truth of the Christian record, we have at the same time, and by necessary consequence, established the truth of every particular doctrine which it contains ; whereas, there is not a single point in the religion of nature which does not require a train of reasoning peculiar to itself, for its discovery, or for its confirmation. It is probably owing to these circumstances, that, in point of fact, incomparably more have been convinced by the evidence for Christianity, of its being the workmanship of God, than were ever convinced or made religious by the mere study of creation, and the mere light of nature.”\*

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## CHAPTER VII.

NO VALID OBJECTION CAN BE FORMED AGAINST A DIVINE REVELATION FROM ITS CONTAINING DIFFICULTIES AND MYSTERIES.

1. DIFFICULTIES and mysteries may be expected in a divine revelation, because, in the first place, they are to be found in the established order of nature, and in the second place, they seem to be closely connected with, and involved in, the subject-matters of such revelation.†

2. First, Difficulties and things apparently liable to objection are to be found in the established order of nature. This is obvious to every one, and universally admitted. We meet with difficulties innumerable in the natural world, the possible existence of which, in our *a priori* reasonings on the subject, we should have denied. Were the instruction which God affords to brute creatures by instincts and mere propensions, and to mankind by these together with reason, matter of probable proof, and not of certain observation, it would be objected as incredible, in many instances of it, only upon account of the means by which this instruction is given, the seeming disproportions, the limitations, necessary conditions, and circumstances of it. For instance : Would it not have been thought highly improbable, that men should have been so much more capable of discovering, even to certainty, the general laws of matter, and the magnitudes, paths, and revolutions of the

\* Thomson's Sermons on Infidelity, p. 34.

† Analogy, p. ii. chap. iii.

heavenly bodies,—than the occasions and cures of distempers, and many other things, in which human life seems so much more nearly concerned than in astronomy? How capricious and irregular a way of information, would it be said, is that of *invention*, by means of which nature instructs us in matters of science, and in many things, upon which the affairs of the world greatly depend. So likewise the imperfections attending the only method by which nature enables and directs us to communicate our thoughts to each other, are innumerable. Language is in its very nature inadequate, ambiguous, liable to infinite abuse, even from negligence; and so liable to it from design, that every man can deceive and betray by it. In like manner, that brutes, without reason, should act, in many respects, with a sagacity and foresight vastly greater than what men have in those respects, would be thought impossible.

3. We might thus go on and specify the difficulties that continually present themselves in the established constitution of things. Beforehand, it would have appeared to us impossible that evil could exist under the government of a Being of infinite goodness and almighty power;—that the gifts of knowledge, eloquence, and influence should be conferred on persons without virtue or prudence;—that during many ages mankind should have been liable to diseases and sufferings from them, and have been all the while left ignorant of those remedies which exist in nature, and which God has provided; and that even after these remedies, or some of them, have been discovered, so very few of the human race should derive advantage from them.

4. Now, our argument is this:—As the constitution of nature and a divine revelation must proceed from the same author, and as there are many difficulties and things apparently liable to be objected to in the one, so there probably will be many difficulties and things apparently liable to be objected to in the other. But as we do not deny that nature is the work of God on account of those things in it which are opposed to our *a priori* reasonings,—neither are we entitled to maintain that a book professing to be a divine revelation is not from God, because it contains mysteries, and things which are contrary to our natural anticipations. On the other hand, the existence of some things in such a book different from what we should have anticipated, and above and beyond our reason, is a confirmation of its claims to a divine original.



5. By these remarks, however, I am not to be understood as affirming, that the contents of a professed divine revelation may not furnish indubitable proofs of its being an imposture. If it contained and inculcated palpable immoralities, and asserted contradictions, we could not receive it as the production of the Fountain of purity and truth. But the case is far otherwise when our only objections to its divine authority arise from its containing things difficult and mysterious. Such things meet us continually in the ordinary administration of the government of God in regard to this world; thus showing how incompetent we are to sit in judgment on the wisdom of our Maker. But if we are incompetent to judge of the wisdom of his ordinary administration;—if in regard to that we are taught the limited nature of our faculties,—is it not highly supposable that there will be felt a still greater incompetency to judge of his extraordinary administration? If in every department of the former we are taught the shortness of our powers, much more supposable is it that their narrowness and limited extent will be shown us by the difficulties and mysteries connected with the latter.

6. If, therefore, the divine authority of a book which claims to be a revelation from God be established by ample and appropriate evidence,—evidence, the variety of which is suited to the great designs which such revelation is intended to answer,—evidence adapted to all the circumstances of the human race, and to the diversities of human character,—then the reception which it demands, and to which it is entitled, is unqualified and absolute, though it should contain things hard to be understood, or even incomprehensible by us.

7. Secondly, Difficulties and mysteries, or things incomprehensible to us, are closely connected with and involved in that which we might suppose would furnish the subject-matter of a revelation from God.

What, might we suppose, would form the subjects of such revelation? These would be the declarations of God concerning his own nature,—his counsels and purposes with respect to his creatures,—the occasion of the sinfulness and fall of man,—the provisions made for their recovery,—the invisible world to which men are related, and to which they shall hereafter belong. These are some of the themes of a revelation from God. And is there not in each of them something that is difficult of comprehension to us?

If it be asked, Is it not the design of a revelation to make known what was formerly unknown, or, if known, imperfectly understood? Why, then, insert in such revelation mysteries and things difficult of comprehension? Our answer is this: Many things concerning the nature of what is revealed may be clear, though many other things concerning their nature may be hid. God requires us to understand no more than is intelligibly revealed. That which is not distinctly revealed, we are not required distinctly to understand. It may be necessary to know a thing in part, and yet not necessary for us to know it perfectly.\* There are doctrines, accordingly, in the Bible which I do not understand in all their bearings, and which, I believe, are not to be fully understood in the present state. Their partial disclosure, however, answers important ends in the great and comprehensive purposes of the divine government; and it is our duty humbly to apply them for the attainment of those gracious designs which they are intended to accomplish.

8. The doctrines of revelation may be mysterious, either in consequence of our information being limited, or because their full comprehension surpasses the extent of our mental powers. Owing to both these causes, there are in the Bible difficulties, and things hard to be understood.

The entrance of sin into the world, and its continued existence under the government of God, forms one of these difficulties. That God, who is infinitely perfect, and who hates all moral evil, could have prevented it, but that he has not chosen to do so, for reasons which to infinite wisdom and goodness must appear just, though not made known to us, are mysterious yet undeniable truths. Whether, if our information regarding them, in place of being partial, had been full and complete, we should have been capable of understanding the entire subject, it is unnecessary to determine. As it is, there is enough revealed to subserve the most important practical purposes, both in regard to this life and to that which is to come.

9. In like manner, the foreknowledge of God is an incontrovertible truth, as is the responsibility of man. They are elements in natural religion, and first principles of divine revelation. But the intervening links, the *media* by which they are united, are not made known to us; and hence the difficulty which has always been felt in reconciling the one with the other. But shall we, on account of this remaining difficulty

\* Edwards' Miscel. Observ. Works, vol. viii. p. 280.

either renounce the facts themselves, or deny the principles involved in them?

10. There is no discovery of revelation more full, or more closely interwoven with the whole scheme of revealed religion, than the unity of God. This doctrine was prominently brought to view in the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations. Throughout, polytheism is denounced as a gross abomination. And yet the same divine revelation is understood by the great majority of Christians as teaching that there are three subsistences, distinct and separate in their operation, existing in one nature. It has been thus understood by the ancient Jews, and by the Christian world for eighteen centuries. Here, then, are facts asserted,—that God is one:—but that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God,—three in one divine nature. I am utterly unable to understand the mode in which plurality is combined with unity. This is a mystery which I may never be capable of comprehending. The mystery arises from the infinitude of the subject, and the limited extent of my faculties. But what is there connected with His essence who is infinite and eternal in his being that is not mysterious? Conception fails us when we attempt to form a notion of a Being who is self-existent, who has had no beginning, and who is without limits. Infinite knowledge implies a perfectly comprehensive view of all things past, present, and to come,—of a whole future eternity beyond the utmost stretch of our imagination. This is, and must be, the attribute of the Deity; and yet it is to us a great mystery.

11. A revelation, then, regarding the Being of infinite perfection, necessarily involves mystery; the mystery is inherent in the subject. It forms, therefore, no objection to the divine authority of a book which claims to be a revelation from God, that its disclosures concerning his nature and mode of subsistence are in some of their bearings incomprehensible to us. In place of attempting to explain away what we are unable to understand, it becomes us to receive the testimony of revelation on the ground of its own authority, hoping that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

12. Again: We may well conceive, that if the Deity has been pleased to give a revelation of his greatest design in the administration of his moral government in regard to this world, there are truths involved in it which surpass our comprehension. For this great purpose must have respect to

the calamitous catastrophe of the fall of man,—to his deliverance from the evils that have overtaken him,—to the whole scheme of God's operations in carrying this purpose forward to its completion,—and to the consequences which are to follow from the mighty plan, on the universal system of moral and intelligent being. Such a scheme must be what the Bible represents it to be, "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God,"—removed in some of its bearings from the thoughts and ways of man,—and therefore the revelation of it may reasonably be expected to contain mysteries.

13. Further: Revelation explicitly asserts the doctrine of divine influence on the human mind. This is one of the leading principles of Christianity, and is essentially involved in it as a system restorative from moral evil. Yet, we feel ourselves incapable of comprehending the mode in which divine influence operates. The mysterious nature of this subject is alluded to by our Lord when he says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Though no truth can be more agreeable to reason than this, that God can operate on the human mind, and change its bias from evil to good, it is attended with difficulty,—difficulty which is inherent in the subject. A divine revelation, therefore, while it makes known the doctrine, does not remove the difficulty: in other words, it does not enable us to comprehend that which, in the present state at least, is incomprehensible.

14. Finally, our future state of existence is involved in mystery. Reason is silent as to its nature. Revelation assures us of the reality,—that the soul and body shall be united,—that unmingled and endless felicity awaits the just in the place prepared for them: but gives us little information in regard to the mode of our existence, the nature of our employments, and the glory to which we shall be exalted. The reason is obvious:—the future will be so unlike the present, that a minute description of it would be unintelligible. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

15. It thus appears that mysteries present no valid objection to the claims of divine revelation, because mysteries of a similar nature exist in the established constitution of things. Every man who reflects on the constitution of his own nature,—on



the union of the mind and body,—the wondrous organization on which the development of the mental powers is dependent,—must be satisfied that he himself is the subject of mysteries. Whether he directs his attention to the wonders of the microscope, or to that universe which the telescope discloses, the limits of which extend far beyond the utmost stretch of imagination;—whether he meditates on the form, number, varieties, and structure of the living beings around him, on the constantly operating laws of vegetation, and the products of the vegetable world,—or, on the discoveries of geological science regarding the processes which are now carrying on in the interior of the earth,—how many things incomprehensible to his understanding present themselves to his view! And with regard to that Being who made them all,—how mysterious the idea that a Being who was the cause of all things was himself without a cause,—that He is every where present, and yet not extended as matter. “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven: what canst thou do? deeper than hell: what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea!”

16. If we do not shut our eyes to the decisive evidence which nature affords, that the material universe was created and is governed by a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and beneficence, notwithstanding the mysteries which it undoubtedly contains;—and if also we admit the proofs, clear and strong, of a system of moral administration adapted to the actions of intelligent beings, though there are certain difficulties here also analogous to those of the natural world;—we surely ought not, and cannot, reject the testimony of revelation, because there too, as in nature and in providence, there are inexplicable difficulties. If truths which are established by ample and appropriate evidence are to be rejected on account of the mysteries by which they are accompanied, then all the doctrines of natural religion must be renounced. There are difficulties in revelation; but they are neither greater nor more numerous than are to be found in nature and providence. The doctrine of original sin is mysterious,—but so is the death of infants. The doctrine of the Trinity is mysterious,—so are the doctrines of the eternity and omnipresence of God. The union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ is mysterious, but so is the union of the soul and body in man. We cannot comprehend the essence of

the Divine Being, or the mode of his subsistence; but neither have we any knowledge of the essence of mind or of matter.

17. Further, it ought to be observed, that the mysteries of revelation are neither contradictory in themselves, nor opposed to the dictates of right reason. They are above it, they are beyond it, but they are not contrary to it. An inexplicable difficulty is neither an absurdity, nor a contradiction of what we know to be true. It is not opposed to all probability and possibility, nor at variance with the testimony either of our senses or of our consciousness, nor revolting to the convictions of our understandings. It is that which we do not comprehend, but it is that which, notwithstanding, is involved in a doctrine indubitably true; and if the truth and authority of the doctrine be admitted, the mystery connected with it cannot be rejected.

18. Finally, The mysteries of revelation are proved to be of divine origin by their influence and tendency. That which invariably tends to the melioration of human character, and to the production of all the fruits of righteousness, must be of heavenly origin. The peculiar doctrines of Christianity, or those principles of revelation which are mysterious, are found to have a mighty influence in increasing the virtue and happiness of mankind. Those by whom they are truly received regard the atonement, for example, as a remedy that is ample as the malady of their moral nature, and which, in their saddest hours, brings to their hearts its healing and its tranquillizing balm. It surprises them not that the facts connected with the incarnation of the Son of God should surpass their full comprehension, and that He only, whose habitation is eternity, can see all their bearings, and calculate with unerring certainty all their vast and distant results. It is enough for them that they can trace their connexion with the process of their recovery from sin and error; and that they experience their operation as incentives to holiness, urging them onwards to higher and still higher degrees of virtue, with a persuasiveness and an energy all their own. Others may reject the mysteries of the Bible because they are beyond their comprehension; but while they derive from them a power that enables them to encounter and overcome evil,—a power that gives them strength in infirmities, and that supports them in afflictions, in necessities, and distresses, have they not reason for adhering to them as the truths of God, and as worthy of all acceptance?

19. When we are satisfied, then, that a book which claims to be a revelation from God was written by men who spoke and who acted under the divine authority, we are warranted by the justest principles of reasoning to give an unhesitating credit to its most mysterious declarations; for though we cannot comprehend the doctrines themselves in *all their bearings*, we can fully understand the nature of the evidence on which they are founded. We are not at liberty to open the record with the determination to bring down its lofty themes to the level of a preconceived theory, or even to the comprehension of reason. When we think, or when we act as if we thought, that we are qualified to decide what are the truths which it is fit for God to reveal, and what it is worthy of human reason to receive, we invest our fallible judgment with an authority to which it is totally inadequate, and for the exercise of which it never was designed. In assuming this prerogative, we act as if the range of our knowledge were infinite,—as if we were capable of judging as to the nature and degree of that illumination which the Almighty may be pleased to communicate; as if we perfectly understood all the maladies of our moral nature, and could ascertain the means proper for remedies.

20. Human reason occupies precisely the same office in unfolding the volume of revelation which it holds in interpreting the volume of nature. It is an elementary principle in true philosophy, that man is only the minister and interpreter of nature, and that he neither knows nor can know anything of her laws or operations but by observation and experiment. The application of this principle to science has been the means of bringing to light the most hidden truths, and has inspired with a confidence in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the order and regularity of the appearances of nature, which has greatly augmented the intellectual power of man. The same obvious and legitimate mode of investigation must be employed in examining a book which claims to be a revelation from God. As the only object of the philosopher is the discovery of truth without pretending to understand, in every case, all the bearings of that truth; in other words, as his design is simply to ascertain what is true, and not to infer the truth of a fact from its susceptibility of being fully understood by the human mind; so, the first question for our consideration is, Whether the book be of divine origin? and

when this question is solved to our satisfaction, by a careful review of the different evidences by which its claims are supported, our duty then is not to judge of what portion we ought to receive on account of its being level to our comprehension, but humbly to receive the whole as given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The notion of a revelation from heaven presupposes ignorance and imperfection in those to whom it is given, and that they are therefore bound to lay aside all vain confidence in their own wisdom, and to look with humility to the Father of Lights for guidance and direction.

21. We readily perceive the folly of a man who would receive only so much of philosophical truth as is perfectly obvious to his understanding, because we are aware, that in the compass of science there is not a single truth for which we can fully account, and all of whose bearings we can fully explain. We can discover the fact,—we can give demonstration for its existence,—we can connect it, in the place which we assign to it in the system of knowledge, with another fact or phenomenon with which it is conjoined, and we may call this proof of its reality, and of the place which it occupies in the order of natural appearances, an explanation,—but the efficient cause of its production is unknown to us, and lies entirely beyond the comprehension of the human understanding. Hence it is, that during the last two centuries, philosophy has not pretended to give more than the laws which regulate the order and succession of the phenomena of nature; and that in conformity to this unassuming pretension, “we are said to explain a phenomenon when we show it to be necessarily included in some phenomenon or fact already known, or supposed to be known; and we consider one phenomenon the cause of another when we conceive the existence of the latter to depend on some force or power residing in the former.”

22. This is the mode of thinking and of reasoning that we are to bring to the investigation of religious truth. As we are satisfied of the truth of all that the volume of nature offers for our instruction, and feel it to be our duty to collect and treasure up her information, without mingling it with the caprices of human fancy; so, if we believe, and are warranted by the strength of evidence in believing, in the divine authority of a book which claims to be a revelation from God, we have only



to ascertain, with prayer for heavenly teaching, what are its contents, without either adding to them or taking from them. We are nearly as unqualified for the task of judging of the fitness or unfitness of the doctrines which infinite wisdom should reveal, as the philosopher is to ascertain, *a priori*, the laws by which the natural world should be governed. Nor are we required to understand theoretically all that a revelation may contain; for a doctrine may have the most important practical uses, while its full comprehension may be reserved for a more perfect state of being: in other words, a doctrine may answer all the ends to be subserved by its forming a part of a revelation from God, though it should continue to be in relation to our understandings a great mystery.

## BOOK II.

### ON THE GENUINENESS, AUTHENTICITY, AND INTEGRITY OF THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### ON THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: THE TERMS GENUINE AND AUTHENTIC DEFINED.

1. IN order to establish the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, we must previously prove them to be genuine and authentic. We shall now briefly adduce the evidence, or rather as much of it as is necessary to carry conviction to every mind, of the unquestionable reality of both. We shall direct our chief attention to the Pentateuch, because, if the authenticity of that be established, the genuineness and authenticity of the other books of the Old Testament will be readily admitted as also proved.

2. The question as to the genuineness and authenticity of the Old Testament Scriptures is of fundamental importance. As they profess to be of divine origin, every reflecting person will naturally inquire, Were they written by the authors whose names they bear, and at the periods to which the events narrated in them relate? Are they genuine? Are they authentic? A book may be genuine that is not authentic, and a book may be authentic that is not genuine. I understand the epithet genuine to signify that which is opposed to spurious or counterfeit; authentic, what is contradistinguished from fictitious. The history which a novelist gives of an imaginary character is genuine, because it is written by him and bears his name; but it is not authentic, being a mere effort of the author's invention in the production of fiction. An authentic narrative is the true account of events that really happened. A book is both genuine and authentic that has been written by the person whose name it bears, and when the information it contains is given on the best authority, and regards persons and events that had real existence.

3. The terms in question have been used in a different acceptation by Principal Hill and Dr. John Cook. The latter, in his elaborate inquiry into the books of the New Testament, uses the term *authenticity* to signify, not the truth of the information contained in writings, but the fact of their having been written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, just in the sense in which I use the term *genuine*. I shall, however, continue to employ the epithet *authentic* to signify works that contain *true* information.

4. I may observe here, that some of the topics which I shall illustrate under the head of the Internal Evidence, might be fitly adduced in proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures. But under this latter head I shall adduce all that is necessary to establish the very important positions which I have in view.

5. That Moses was the lawgiver of Israel, and that he gave them a written record of the laws which had been issued by him, and of the events which accompanied the earlier part of the dispensation of which he was the founder, are facts which all antiquity has acknowledged. That the Pentateuch was the record which was thus communicated, has also been universally owned, and admits of ample proof. We have indeed the strongest evidence in attestation of the fact, that the sacred books in our possession, which bear his name, were written by him; for, from the beginning of the Jewish history till the present day, in every age and country, these writings, by general consent, are attributed to Moses as their author. At every step, as we travel backward through the intervening centuries, this point is most fully and incontrovertibly established.

6. If we begin this investigation at the Christian era, we shall find that two hundred years before that period, in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, the Pentateuch, with the other books of the Old Testament, was translated into Greek for the use of the Alexandrian Jews; and from the almost universal prevalence of that language, it henceforth became very widely disseminated, and was thus made accessible to the learned and inquisitive of every country. That Greek translation, or the Septuagint, proves that the books of Moses, in common with the other books of the Old Testament, must have existed two hundred years before Christ, because there is that correspondence between the two which proves that the former is a version of the latter. But it is not more certain that the Pentateuch

existed two hundred years before Christ, than that it must have been in existence in the days of Ezra at the time of the return from Babylon, in the year before Christ 536. That it was written before the time of Ezra, and that it was known to the people of Israel before that era, are points equally certain, for, in the book of Ezra, the law of Moses, the man of God, is specifically referred to as a well-known written document then actually existing; and in the succeeding book of Nehemiah, we are informed of the manner in which that written document was openly read to the people under the name of the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

7. It claims our particular notice here, that it was the people themselves who called upon Ezra to read that book, as a work with which they had long been familiarly acquainted. All the people gathered themselves together as one man, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.\* And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people: also, day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the Book of the Law of God. We find, also, the leading facts of the Mosaic narrative thus alluded to in prayer, in the hearing of all the people, as things with which they were familiar:—"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all. Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham: and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him, to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: and didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea: and showedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land; for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them: so didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land: and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover, thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light

\* Nehemiah viii. ix. x.



in the way wherein they should go. Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments and true laws, and statutes, and commandments: and madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: and gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy god that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; yet thou, in thy manifold mercies, forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing: their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not."

8. From this quotation it is evident that the leading facts contained in the Mosaic narrative were well known to the people of Israel in the days of Ezra; but if they were familiar with them at that era, the document which gives an account of them must have been in existence before. The circumstance of the people calling upon Ezra to bring forth and read the Book of the Law of Moses, proves that the law of Moses must have been well known to exist in writing previous to the return from Babylon. Even if it were alleged that it was suppressed by Ezra in favour of a spurious composition of his own, those who make the supposition must assume that he had contrived to make himself master of every extant copy of the genuine work, and that he must have persuaded a whole people to receive as genuine what almost every man amongst them must immediately have perceived to be spurious. For, if the genuine work were in existence down to the very time of Ezra, a point clearly involved in the demand of the people to have it read to them: and if the people had been long accustomed to hear it read to them, a point equally implied in their recorded demand upon Ezra, they must all have been adequately acquainted with its contents, and the higher ranks among them must have repeatedly perused, and must therefore have known the whole of it,

just as intimately as Ezra could do himself. But what was thus universally familiar could be no more set aside by the fiat of an individual in favour of his own spurious composition, than the Pentateuch could now be set aside throughout Christendom in favour of some newly produced volume which claimed to be the genuine Law of Moses. Add to this, that when the foundations of the second temple were laid, many persons were alive who well remembered the first. These, consequently, must have known whether there was or was not a written law of Moses anterior to the captivity; nor could they be deceived by the production of any novel composition by Ezra.

9. This important fact is, in another way, incontrovertibly established. There is now extant a copy of the Pentateuch, preserved by the Samaritans, the hereditary enemies of the Jews. The Samaritan Pentateuch is literally the same as the Jewish, a very few immaterial things excepted. The identity of their original therefore is placed beyond a doubt. When did the Samaritans procure their copy? The violent hatred which that people and the Jews entertained towards each other, and which never raged with greater fury than in the time of Ezra, proves that it must have been in their possession prior to that period, and indeed before Judah had been carried captive to Babylon. Every one acquainted with the history of Israel knows, that the Samaritans were a mixed multitude from various parts of the dominions of the King of Assyria, sent by that monarch to succeed the ten tribes whom he had sent into exile, and whose territories he had left desolate. In order to avert certain calamities with which they were visited, the Assyrian king commanded that one of the priests whom he had brought from thence should return, and teach them the manner of the God of the land: that is, how to worship and serve Jehovah the God of Israel. The result was, a professed homage to the true God, united to the superstitious observances practised in reverence of their native idols. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations.

10. This was the period at which the books of Moses came into the possession of the Samaritans: that is, about the year 676 before the Christian era. From that time we have the most unexceptionable testimony,—the testimony of two hostile and rival sects, vouching for the faithful preservation of the text of the Septuagint.

11. But it is also evident that this portion of the Old Tes-

tament Scriptures was in existence from the time of the revolt of the ten tribes. The priest who was sent to instruct the Samaritans, was to teach them the manner of the God of the land, according to the law and commandment which Jehovah commanded the children of Jacob whom he named Israel,—a circumstance which proves that the manner of worship and Law of Jehovah had been previously possessed by the Israelitish tribes. These tribes had revolted from Judah, and had formed themselves into an opposite and rival kingdom. The sacred books could not have been fabricated or vitiated during the period of their rivalry; for, if any one of the nations attempted either the introduction of a spurious work, or the vitiation of an authentic document which had previously existed, their rival would not have been slow to expose them; nor could the effort to practise such deception have been made without being immediately detected. It is, therefore, evident that the Israelites could not have received the books of Moses from the Jews, nor the Jews from the Israelites. They both, however, equally possessed that code during the period of their separation. It must therefore have existed prior to their separation from each other. This took place about the year 975 before the Christian era. Therefore, the very Pentateuch which we now have, must at that time have been in existence; not only have been in existence, but well known throughout all the Hebrew tribes; not only well known throughout all the Hebrew tribes, but so fully acknowledged to be the genuine and inspired Law of Moses, that neither Jeroboam, nor any who succeeded him in reigning over the kingdom of Israel, dared to impeach it, or to reject it, though it constituted the great obstacle to that innovation which, from motives of state policy, they introduced, the preventing of the people from going up to Jerusalem to worship, as the law of Moses enjoined.

12. We are thus brought to the reign of David and Solomon, during which we are assured that the books attributed to Moses did not originate. David bears explicit testimony to the authority of the law, and recommends it to his son as the guide of his private and public conduct. With regard to Solomon, its previous existence is proved by the splendid ceremonial of that temple which he built; not to say, that the circumstance of his conduct having been so much opposed to some of its prohibitions, shows that he neither wrote it himself, nor sanctioned the writing of it.

13. Nor can the Pentateuch be ascribed to the prophet Samuel, to whose time we have now extended our investigation. The piety, patriotism, and disinterestedness of that distinguished man allow us not to suspect him to have been capable either of fabricating books in the name of Moses, or of vitiating those authentic documents which had previously existed. Even if he had been capable of making such an attempt, how was it possible that he could persuade all Israel to adopt, as the authoritative law of Moses, a mere modern composition of his own, which no person had ever before heard of? How could he have done this in any circumstances, but especially after he had aroused the hostility of Saul? When that prince was severely rebuked by him, how readily and certainly would he have pointed out the gross imposture, had he been able so to do; and have demanded the most positive proof of the authority under which he claimed to act in this unceremonious treatment of his sovereign. But in place of this, he acknowledges the divine authority of the law, humbles himself before his reprover, confesses the truth of his charge, that he had transgressed the commandment of the Lord. We know enough of the character of Saul to be assured that he would not have made such humbling acknowledgments in the presence of the people of Israel, if he could possibly have acted otherwise; and had not the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses been fully established, would he have listened to the threatening of being deprived of his kingdom, merely "because he had not obeyed a forged commandment to exterminate the Amalekites?"

14. During the three hundred and sixty years that elapsed between the entrance of Israel into Canaan and the appointment of Saul to be king, they lived under the government of Judges. While each tribe occupied the territory which had been allotted to it, and was governed by its own rulers, all were united together by the observance of the same divine laws, and by one general council. The people heard the books of the law read, the authority of which they acknowledged as the written law of Moses, which they had received as the rule of their conduct, and by which their Judges regulated their government. The power of these rulers was limited; they had not the influence of wealth, or of hereditary rank; and at their death their official authority, and all the consequence which it gave them in the eyes of the people, devolved upon members



of other families, who were under no obligation, and who could have no interest in adopting the views of their predecessors. It was therefore impossible for them, even if they had been inclined, to persuade the people to receive a fabrication of their own as the law of Moses, or to vitiate the authentic document which that legislator had so recently committed to them.

15. Indeed, the existence and the divine authority of the law of Moses are implied in the frequent notices which occur during the history of this period, of the deviations of many of the people, and of their disobedience and rebellion in adopting the idolatrous practices of the heathen. If there had existed a doubt of the genuineness and authenticity of the Mosaic writings, which condemned their vicious propensities and habits, which obliged them to undergo the humiliation of confessing their sins; to separate themselves from the surrounding nations, and to return to ceremonies which many must have felt as burdensome, would they have resumed the observance of that same law, and have submitted to its ordinances with reverence?

16. Yet we find, during this period, a constant reference to the writings of Moses, as inspired and authoritative. The man of God, in his prophetic threat to Eli, reminds him of the circumstance recorded in the Pentateuch, that the house of his ancestor had been chosen to the priesthood out of all the tribes of Israel. It is also said, that certain of the Canaanitish nations were left in the land for the purpose of proving the people of Israel, that it might be known whether they would hearken to the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. In the following remarkable terms Joshua is represented as asserting that the Book of the Law of God is the Book of the Law of Moses; as reading its contents to all the assembled people, so that none could be ignorant of them, and as even writing a copy of it in their presence. "Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal. As Moses the servant of the Lord commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift any iron; and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace-offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. And afterwards he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a

word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.”\* To some of the leading facts narrated in the writings of Moses, Joshua refers when addressing all the tribes of Israel, with their elders and judges, at Shechem. “I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac; and I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau: but Jacob and his children went down unto Egypt. I sent Moses also, and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them; and afterward I brought you out. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt; and ye came into the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea. And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long time. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour.” In his farewell address to the children of Israel, Joshua exhorts them to do all the things that the law of Moses enjoins: “Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.”†

17. Our investigation has thus reached the time of Moses; and we have traced, by evidence which cannot be controverted, the existence of the writings of Moses to the period in which he lived. These writings inform us of their own original: they assert that Moses was their author. “And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.”‡

18. We have thus proved the genuineness and authenticity of the writings of Moses. The evidence by which these are established is much stronger than what can be adduced in support of the genuineness and authenticity of any merely human composition. The Mosaic writings, as well as the books of the Old Testament in general, were written by distinguished per-

\* Joshua viii. 30—35.

† Ib. xxiv.

‡ Deut. xxxi. 9—14.

sons, were immediately given to the public, and extensively made known; they involved important interests, affected the rights of communities, families, and even individuals. There is no rival or opposing claim to that which they advance, no conflicting evidence, no doubt expressed, no contradicting external circumstances.

19. The genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses, thus fully established, may be proved by another train of reasoning. This shows the variety and abundance of the evidence by which their truth is attested. I remark,—

20. (I.) That they were made public in the age in which Moses lived, and have ever since been constantly read in public and in private. Provision was made for making them universally known in every succeeding generation. For it was not only enjoined in general on the Jews, that they should diligently teach their children all the words that God delivered to them by Moses and the prophets; but it was specially commanded in the books of Moses, that at the end of every seven years, when all Israel should come to appear before the Lord in the place which he should choose, this law should be publicly read before all Israel in their hearing; before men, and women, and children, and strangers, without any privacy or reservation; that they might hear, and that they might learn, and that they might fear the Lord, and that they might observe to do all the words of this law. In obedience to this injunction, Joshua, as we have seen, assembled all the tribes of Israel, with their elders and judges, and read to them all that is written in the book of the law. The reading of the sacred writings formed a part of the worship of the Jews every Sabbath. They must therefore have been well acquainted with these writings from the time in which they were first delivered to them. What affectionate solicitude does their great Legislator show in the following injunction, that they and their posterity throughout all generations should be perfectly familiar with them:—"These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in the house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates."\*

\* Deut. vi. 6—10.

21. We have thus, from the time in which the Mosaic writings were given, the strongest pledge of their genuineness, authenticity, and uncorrupt preservation. It would have been just as impossible to introduce a new and spurious Pentateuch, as it would be now impossible to introduce a new and spurious Bible. In each case the reason is the very same, *the general publicity of the book itself*. The sacred volumes of the pagan hierarchy were locked up in their temples, and were carefully withheld from the profane vulgar; hence they might be tampered with, from time to time, according to the interest or pleasure of the priesthood. But the law of Moses disclaimed, from the very first, all mysterious secrecy: the written volume was to be communicated without reserve to every individual Israelite; hence it was absolutely impossible that such a code could either be interpolated to serve a present turn, or be altogether supplanted by a new composition, which, at a late period, claimed to be the genuine record. Let us fix when we please for the appearance of the novel code, and we shall ever find ourselves utterly unable to get rid of the old one, which is spoken of as actually existing in the days of Moses and Joshua.

22. (II.) The genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch are proved by a consideration of the facts narrated. Many of these were of an extraordinary and decidedly miraculous nature; and the Jews are appealed to as witnesses of their reality. Could they have believed that they sojourned in Egypt; that they were delivered from bondage in that country by a miraculous interposition of Almighty God; that the Red sea was divided to give them a passage, while their pursuers were overwhelmed by its waves and perished; that they were sustained during forty years in the wilderness by manna from heaven; that the river Jordan had ceased to flow till they had walked across its channel;—could they have believed these things, or have admitted that they were witnesses of them, unless they had actually occurred? In narrating these and many other facts, does not the writer remind them of what their eyes had seen, and their ears had heard? Among the multitude whom he conducted to Canaan, had he not enemies who, on several occasions, attacked his procedure? Did they ever impeach his veracity, or charge him with imposture? How eagerly would they have availed themselves of such a charge, had there existed the slightest ground for it, as justifying them in their opposition!



23. It may here be remarked, that the Jews, at no period of their history, could be accused of a proneness to receive, without indubitable evidence, books professing to be of divine authority. They have, on the contrary, resisted and rejected writings which all Christians believe to be sufficiently attested as a revelation from God. They persecuted and often killed their own prophets, merely because their doctrines did not accord with their corrupt feelings and sentiments. What, then, but the fullest conviction of the authenticity and even divine authority of the Mosaic writings, could lead them cordially to receive as sacred, books which imposed restraints on their natural propensities, which denounced a severe malediction against sins to which they were prone, and which recorded circumstances in their history which were extremely humbling to their national pride?

24. The facts narrated in these books clearly establish their genuineness. They are of such a character as to have rendered it impossible to insert them as interpolations at any period subsequent to the time of Moses; because the Jews were appealed to as witnesses of their reality; and because provision was made, as we have seen, for making every individual familiarly acquainted with the Mosaic writings, as well as with the other Hebrew Scriptures, from the time of their authors. The existence of such provision was incompatible with forgery, either in whole or in part. The work of an impostor must have been a production totally different from the Pentateuch. For what impostor would have needlessly betrayed his forgery, by inserting in his writing a declaration that his book was appointed to be publicly read, in order that the whole nation might be thoroughly acquainted with its contents, from the very time of its first composition? Or, how could he persuade the Israelites to receive it as the composition of Moses, to believe that they had always among them this novel production, and that they had always been accustomed to hear it publicly read, so that they were familiarly acquainted with its contents?

25. Nor can it diminish the force of these observations to urge, that, as numerous legends of miracles have been admitted into the Roman church, so numerous legends of wonders might equally have been adopted into the national creed of Israel. For it is obvious that the two cases are not parallel. To prove from the Romish legends that the Pentateuch might have been

interpolated, it will be necessary to show, that legendary tales have been admitted into the New Testament, otherwise the mere insulated existence of such legends does not at all bear upon the present question. The Talmudical wonders of the Jewish rabbins may well vie with the miraculous exploits of the popish saints ; but the tales of the Talmud have not more been inserted in the Pentateuch, than the miracles of the popish saints have been inserted in the New Testament. The Jews were faithful to the trust reposed in them, in preserving inviolable the sacred books committed to their care.

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## CHAPTER II.

### EVIDENCE OF THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE PENTATEUCH CONTINUED.

1. HAVING traced the Mosaic writings to the time of Moses, and shown that he was unquestionably their author, I proceeded with a train of thought somewhat different, for the purpose of furnishing additional confirmation of their genuineness and authenticity. I remarked, in the first place, that they were made public in the age in which Moses lived, and have ever since been read in public and in private ; in the second place, that the character of the facts narrated attests the genuineness and authenticity of the record. I now observe,—

2. (III.) That throughout the history of the Jewish people, there was reference made to these books, and testimony borne concerning them as authentic and divine. In nearly all the books of the Old Testament, from Joshua down to Malachi, there is mention made of the written volume of the law of Moses as in actual existence, and as being well known to the people. This furnishes evidence of their genuineness and authenticity, which cannot be adduced in regard to any other writings, except those connected with the Christian dispensation. The five books of Moses were one continued work, generally in Scripture called the Law, and in all the manuscripts they are found to have been written without any division into separate parts. The other portions of the Old Testament, though included in one volume, were written at different periods, and by different persons ; and it is of importance to bear this in mind, when estimating the amount of direct testimony given in succession by a series of different and independent writers to the Mosaic record. Joshua, who conducted

the people of Israel to the promised land, and who wrote the book which bears his name, gave testimony, in the audience of all Israel, to the divine authority of the law of Moses. The book which records the history of this people after the death of Joshua, is called Judges, because it contains an outline of their history during the administration of those Judges whom God raised up successively to deliver them from their enemies. These governors were not regular in their succession, but were called at different times, and from different tribes and families, to the exercise of authority. It is probable that the book of Judges was written by the prophet Samuel during the reign of Saul, because the words which frequently occur in it, "in those days there was no king in Israel," seem to imply, that there was a king in Israel when this writing was composed and published. In this book there is reference to the law of Moses, the authenticity and divine authority of which were universally acknowledged. It is spoken of as the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. In the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, we observe the same acknowledgment: the people are commanded to keep the charge of the Lord their God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, as it is written in the law of Moses. A leading object of the ministry of the prophets was to enforce the authority and observance of the commandments which Moses had delivered to Israel. Accordingly, David, who united the prophetic to the regal office, in his last injunction to Solomon his son, said, "Keep thou the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest."

3. We find also in the prayer of Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, that he alludes to the facts recorded in the Mosaic narrative; and makes explicit mention of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage: "For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses, thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God." Jehoshaphat is said to have sent nine Levites and two priests, who had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. The captives who returned to Jerusalem,

in consequence of the permission of Cyrus, are said to have "builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God." But it is unnecessary to multiply examples from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Malachi, and the other writers of the Old Testament Scriptures, in proof of the explicit testimony which they bore to the genuineness, authenticity, and authority of the Books of Moses; for the existence of such full and continuous testimony is not of course and cannot be denied.

4. Does not this evidence, given by a succession of different and independent writers, fully establish the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch? For if the Pentateuch were not genuine, if it were the production of a comparatively modern author, we should be compelled additionally to suppose that the same author likewise wrote almost every other book of the Hebrew Scriptures, since these other Scriptures so constantly refer to the Pentateuch. If it were alleged that Ezra was the author of the Pentateuch, how are we to account for its being mentioned in the book of Joshua? If the book of Joshua were written prior to Ezra, and if Ezra himself were the author of the Pentateuch, the book of Joshua plainly could not have mentioned the Pentateuch. But the book of Joshua does mention the Pentateuch, declaring it also to have been publicly read to all the people. Therefore, if the Pentateuch were the work of Ezra, the book of Joshua must likewise have been the work either of Ezra or of some of his confederates. Exactly the same argument will apply to every other book in which the law is either mentioned or alluded to. Hence every book, which either notices it, or which even supposes its existence, must inevitably have been more recent than the Pentateuch itself. So that, if we ascribe the Pentateuch to Ezra, we must likewise ascribe to him nearly the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures,—a conclusion so palpably absurd, that its mere statement is its refutation.

5. Besides, we are to remember that the continuous testimony given to the existence of the written law of Moses, may be regarded as the testimony of the whole nation of Israel, from the time of their great legislator till the close of the Jewish polity. For every Israelite had the deepest interest in being well acquainted with a book which contained the law by which their civil concerns were regulated; the law which assigned its territorial limits to each tribe; which fixed the descent of



landed property; under which every man made good his title to the perpetually entailed, though temporarily alienated, inheritance of his forefathers; and the law by which their religious observances and worship were prescribed. How was it possible that this code could have been formed at any period subsequent to the establishment of the tribes of Israel in Canaan? As reasonably might we assert that the whole code of the English law was forged by Blackstone, and that it had no existence before him, as that the whole code of the Hebrew law was a mere novelty forged by Ezra. Many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, says Ezra, had seen the first house, and were moved to tears when they had compared it to the second: not one of these persons, therefore, could have been imposed upon by any novel code which that scribe might seek to introduce: as they well remembered the first temple, they must likewise have well remembered whether they had or had not a written law prior to the captivity. Ezra remarks, that when the second temple was dedicated, they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God which is at Jerusalem, *as it is written in the book of Moses*. Now, if this book of Moses were all the while written by himself, how could he persuade the people, especially as there were some among them who remembered the first temple, that he was arranging matters according to a well-known ancient code, when, after all, that code had absolutely no existence until he first produced it subsequently to the Babylonish captivity? If the English were exiled for the space of seventy years, and if, at the close of that period, they were brought back to their country, they could not return perfectly ignorant whether they had ever been governed by a written law, they could not return liable to be imposed upon by a superstitious law, the author of which persuades them to accept of it as the genuine and familiar code of their fathers.

6. (IV.) Let us briefly notice the constitution and government, both civil and religious, of the Israelitish nation. From the time in which the Israelites are said to have received the law from God at Sinai, they stood to each other in the relation of sovereign and subjects. He condescended to place himself at the head, as it were, of their body politic; to issue laws to them in their civil and religious capacity; to appoint temporal rewards and punishments; and to maintain the economy thus

established by his watchful and special providence. The government being a theocracy, the persons to whom the administration of it was committed could not be either legislators or supreme sovereigns, but merely officers appointed by and who acted under the authority of God, whose duty it was to see that the laws which he had enacted were regularly observed.

7. From the death of Joshua till the elevation of Saul to the throne, these officers were the high priest and those occasional magistrates who were raised up from time to time under the denomination of Judges. Towards the end of the administration of the eminently pious and virtuous Samuel, the people demanded a king over them, that they also might be like all the nations. If they had obtained such a king as they apparently wished for, they would have had a chief magistrate supreme and absolute, whose will was law, and whose laws he could enforce, suspend, or abrogate at pleasure. But this God denied them; and under the regal government, no less than under the Judges, God was the sole Legislator and supreme Sovereign of Israel,—not permitting the persons whom he appointed as deputies, under the name of kings, to enact a new or repeal an old law,—to make any change in their civil or ecclesiastical code; but requiring them and the whole nation strictly to conform themselves to the institutions and ordinances which he had given to them. He gave them a king, not as their legislator and supreme sovereign, but as his servant, whom he, and not the people, selected and appointed, and to him alone he was amenable for the exercise of the executive power committed to his trust. The existence, authenticity, and inviolability of the law of Moses were assumed in the nature of his appointment, and in the limits which were placed to his power.

8. Besides, from the earliest period of the Jewish history, we find the nation divided into tribes, all professing one religion, the institutions of which were of a nature to strengthen the bonds by which they were otherwise united. Irrespectively of the general and common union, each tribe had its individual interest, its separate and unalienable property, its judges, chiefs, and rulers. There were leading men in each tribe whose situation and office naturally led them to give special attention to their religion and laws: and it may well be supposed that the mutual jealousy of the tribes would operate favourably in regard to a scrupulous preservation of the sacred

books. Such a political constitution must have had the same direct tendency to prevent any interpolation of the Pentateuch before the days of Samuel, as the division of the Christian church into various denominations has had to prevent any interpolation of the New Testament: and from the time when the Israelites were divided into two kingdoms, each possessing numerous copies of the Pentateuch, that volume could have been no more interpolated without instant detection, than the volume of the New Testament, from the time of the apostles down to the present hour.

9. Another peculiar circumstance connected with the Jewish polity, favourable to the inviolable preservation of the law of Moses and the sacred books, was the dedication of one of the twelve tribes to the service of God and of religion. It was devoted to the study of the Word of God, the communication of spiritual knowledge, and the administration of divine ordinances. The priests were taken from the tribe of Levi thus separated, and it was their duty both to teach the law of Moses, and to enforce the observance of it. To enable them to attend without distraction to this important object, no inheritance was given to them; and in order that all the people might enjoy the benefit of their ministry, they were scattered among the other tribes. These circumstances, united to the extent of the numbers consecrated to the service of religion, tended to preserve the purity and integrity of the sacred writings, and to prevent the substitution of others in their room. They were their appointed guardians; and they were too well instructed, and too jealous of the honour to which they were raised, to have allowed the introduction of spurious books. Nor did the peculiar constitution of the Jewish government, to which I have already adverted, nor the knowledge universally diffused among the people, permit any, even if they had been inclined, to make such an attempt.

10. Here we are also to recollect the existence of another order of men among the Jews,—persons who were in succession raised up to instruct the people in the knowledge of the doctrines and precepts of the law of Moses; to reprove them for their deviations from the statutes and ordinances which that legislator commanded them to observe; and to denounce the judgments which should be inflicted, if they persisted in their disobedience. The exalted office of the prophets, while it secured to them the esteem of pious princes, exposed them frequently,

in consequence of the duties it required them to discharge, to poverty, persecution, and death. Bold and faithful reprovers of iniquity, they bore a decided testimony against whatever tended to weaken the authority or affect the observance of the law of Moses. Unlike the priesthood, who had a legal provision for their support, the prophets were dependent on the presents they received : simple in their habits, and disregarding secular honours and advantages, they reproved impiety, and revealed the wrath of God against all who violated the ordinances and laws which he had established in Israel. From the time of Samuel there were seminaries, which were termed schools of the prophets, in which persons were trained in holy exercise and discipline, in the knowledge of God and of his law, and were fitted for the discharge of similar duties with their instructors. Institutions of this nature were continued, and were numerous in subsequent ages, not only in Judea, but also among the ten tribes ; and it is evident that they must have greatly contributed to preserve the writings of Moses from corruption, and still more to prevent the substitution of spurious books in their room.

11. Nor ought we to overlook, as conducing to these ends, the influence of the Sanhedrim, the great council of the nation. Though each tribe was under a distinct government and administration of justice of its own, there was a union of the tribes in one body or council, called the elders, judges, and rulers of the congregation of Israel. The great representative body, which met to consult about the good of the nation, was probably composed of persons chosen out of every tribe, together with the high priest and some Levites. The object of this court was to administer justice, to watch over the institutions of the land, to guard against every innovation, and to see that the laws and ordinances given by Moses were faithfully observed.

12. To these observations it may be added, that the Sabbath, which was set apart for sacred purposes, continued to be observed from the time of Moses, and that, on this day, the people celebrated the praises of God, presented their supplications unto him, and read and heard his word. Though we cannot ascertain, with absolute certainty, when the service of the synagogue commenced, it is highly probable that it began at a very early period, at least that a service of a similar nature was performed. Besides this, the regular observance of the three great annual festivals by the whole nation must have tended greatly



to the unadulterated preservation of the books of Moses. To this assembled multitude, as was formerly remarked, the whole law of Moses was read; and though this practice, expressly enjoined by Moses, might be sometimes neglected during the reign of wicked kings, the observance was always renewed after short intervals. In a word, all the institutions, forms of worship, civil and religious observances, of the Jews, maintained on their minds, in every period of their history, a conviction of the genuineness, authenticity, and divine authority of the books of Moses, as well as of the Scriptures which were subsequently added to them. What motive could they have to forge any of the books of Moses, or of the Old Testament Scriptures? It could not be national pride; for there is scarcely one of these books which does not severely censure the national manners. It could not be the love of fame, for that passion would have taught them to flatter and extol the national character; and the punishment, if detected, would have been infamy and death. The love of wealth could not produce such a forgery, for no wealth was to be gained by it.

13. I would only farther observe, in regard to the evidence derived from the constitution and government of the Jews of the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch, that this record contains ceremonial and moral laws, which, unless we reject the authority of all history, were observed by the Israelites from the time of their departure out of Egypt till their dispersion at the taking of Jerusalem. These laws, therefore, are as ancient as the conquest of Palestine. It is also an undeniable historical fact, that the Jews in every age believed that their ancestors had received them from the hand of Moses, and that these laws were the basis of their political and religious institutions, as long as they continued to be a people. We are therefore reduced to this dilemma, to acknowledge either that these laws were actually delivered by Moses, or that a whole nation during fifteen hundred years groaned under the weight of an imposture, without once detecting or even suspecting the fraud. The Athenians believed that the system of laws by which they were governed was composed by Solon; and the Spartans attributed their code to Lycurgus, without ever being suspected of a mistake in their belief. Why then should it be doubted that the rules prescribed in the Pentateuch were given by Moses? To deny it, is to assert that an effect may exist without a cause, or that a great and important revolution may take place with-

out an agent. We have therefore an argument little short of mathematical demonstration, that the substance of the Pentateuch proceeded from Moses ; and that the very words were written by him is a moral certainty.\*

14. When we consider, then, all that has been advanced in proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch ; that it was the deed by which the land of Canaan was divided among the Israelites ; that it was the code by which their civil and religious concerns were regulated ; that at stated seasons it was publicly read before all the people ; that it was appointed to be kept in the ark for a witness against those who transgressed it ; that the king was required to write for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests and the Levites, and to read therein all the days of his life ; that the priests were commanded to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by the hand of Moses ; that parents were enjoined not only to make it familiar to themselves, but also to teach it diligently to their children ; and that a severe prohibition was annexed, against either making any addition to or diminution from the law ; when we consider all these and the other particulars alluded to, we must be satisfied, that we have every possible evidence that the genuine text of the Pentateuch proceeded from the hands of Moses, and that it has been transmitted to us pure and uncorrupt. But in addition to this body of evidence, we have—

15. (V.) The testimony of Jewish and profane authors. Philo, an Egyptian Jew, who lived in the first century of the Christian era ; and Josephus, who was contemporary with the apostles, directly affirm, that canonical authority was universally ascribed by the Jewish people to the books contained in the Hebrew Bible, and to no other. “ We have not thousands of books,” says Josephus, “ discordant and contradicting each other ; but we have only twenty-two, which comprehend the history of all former ages, and are justly regarded as divine. Five of them proceeded from Moses ; they include as well the laws as an account of the creation of man, extending to the time of (Moses’) death. This period comprehends nearly three thousand years. From the death of Moses to that of Artaxerxes, who was king of Persia after Xerxes, the prophets who succeeded Moses, committed to writing, in thirteen books, what was done in their days. The remaining four books contain

\* Marsh’s Authenticity of the Five Books of Moses, pp. 7, 8.

hymns (psalms) to God, and instructions of life for man." To perceive the full force of this testimony of Josephus to the genuineness, authenticity, and canonical authority of all the books of the Hebrew Bible, it is necessary to remark, that although the Old Testament, according to the division which obtains in our Bibles, comprises thirty-nine books, the ancient Jews formed them only into twenty-two books, according to the twenty-two letters of their alphabet. They reckoned Judges and Ruth, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jeremiah and his Lamentations, and the twelve minor prophets respectively, as one book. The division of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, mentioned by Josephus, was recognised by our Lord and his apostles.

16. In addition to this, the Targums or Paraphrases of Onkelos on the Pentateuch, and of Jonathan Ben Ursiel on the prophets, written about fifty years before the time of Christ, prove the genuineness of those books at that period. To the Septuagint translation, executed at Alexandria at a period considerably earlier, I have already alluded.

17. In addition to the testimony of native Jews, we have the explicit testimony of many distinguished writers of pagan antiquity. The genuineness of the Mosaic record was not denied by any of the opponents of Christianity during the first four centuries, although the apostles, and after them the fathers, constantly appealed to the history and prophecies of the Old Testament in proof of the divine origin of the doctrines which they taught. Even the Emperor Julian confessed that the books which bear the name of Moses are genuine, and that the facts they narrate are worthy of credit. The Egyptian, Phenician, Greek, and Roman authors, concur in relating the traditions respecting the creation, the fall of man, the deluge, and the dispersion of mankind ; and, as has been very ably shown, our acquaintance with the eastern world has confirmed all these traditions as concurring with the narrative in the sacred history.

18. (VI.) The books of Moses, and the other books of the Old Testament, bear the most striking internal proof of their genuineness and authenticity. The language and style furnish important evidence on this head. "It is an undeniable fact," as Bishop Marsh observes, "that Hebrew ceased to be the living language of the Jews soon after the Babylonish captivity, and that the Jewish productions after that period were in general either

Chaldee or Greek. The Jews of Palestine, some ages before the appearance of our Saviour, were unable to comprehend the Hebrew original without the assistance of a Chaldee paraphrase; and it was necessary to undertake a Greek translation, because that language alone was known to the Jews of Alexandria. It necessarily follows, therefore, that every book which is written in pure Hebrew was composed either before or about the time of the Babylonish captivity." The book of Malachi, for this reason, could not have been written much later than the Babylonish captivity; before that period, therefore, were written the prophecies of Isaiah, still earlier the Psalms of David, and much earlier than these the books of Moses. Now, on comparison, the several parts of the Hebrew Bible are found thus to differ, not only in regard to style, but also in regard to character and cultivation of language; the one discovering the golden, the other the silver, a third the brazen, and a fourth the iron age, and thus exhibiting strong internal marks of their having been composed at different and distant periods. The language of the Pentateuch is a proof of its high antiquity.

19. A language is at once the most complete and the least fallible of all historical records. A poem, or a history, may have been forged, but not a language. The bare circumstance of its existence, though it may long have ceased to be colloquially extant, proves in substance all that history can communicate. If we possessed only a complete vocabulary of an ancient language, and were to digest the mass in accordance with an exact principle of synthesis, we should frame a model of the people who once used it more perfect than any other monument can furnish. The precise extent of knowledge and civilization to which a people have attained, nothing more and nothing less, is marked out in the list of words of which they have made use.

20. A language, if we might use the comparison, may be called a cast taken from the very life, and it is one which represents the world of mind as well as the world of matter. The common objects of nature, the peculiarities of climate, the works of art, the details of domestic life, political institutions, religious opinions and observances, philosophy, poetry, and art, every form and hue of the external world, and every modification of thought, find in language their representatives.

21. Having therefore a complete knowledge of any language, that is to say, of the words of which it consists, we possess a mass of facts by which to judge of the claims to authenticity of



every work in which that language is embodied. And if, in addition to a knowledge of its vocabulary, the laws of its construction, and the nicest proprieties of syntax and of style are known; and if, moreover, the changes that have taken place from age to age, in the senses of words, and in modes of expression, are ascertained, we have ample and exact data with which to compare every book that pretends to antiquity and genuineness. From a writer who employs his native language it must be expected that he should conform to its standing usages; that he should bend more or less to the peculiarities of the age in which he writes, and that his vocabulary should fairly include that compass of words which his subject demands, and which the language affords.

22. Language being a mirror reflecting all the communicable notions of the people who use it, every mutation in the condition of the people must bring with it either new terms or new combinations of words; and as the particular circumstances which introduce such additions or alterations are often well known, their occurrence in an author may serve to fix the date of the book with little uncertainty.

23. Every language, therefore, of which copious specimens are extant, and of which the progress is known, contains a latent history of the people through whose lips it has passed, and furnishes to the scholar a series of recondite dates, by means of which literary remains may almost with certainty be assigned to their proper age. This sort of evidence bears the same relation to the history of books which that derived from the successive changes known to have taken place in the mode of writing, bears to the history of manuscripts. It is of a subsidiary kind, and from its very indirectness often deserves peculiar attention.

24. Further: The number of particular circumstances mentioned in the Old Testament, with regard to time, place, and persons, is an argument in favour of its genuineness and truth. At present, I shall confine myself to the Pentateuch.

25. In the book of Genesis are mentioned the creation and fall of man, the generations of the antediluvian patriarchs, the deluge with its circumstances, the building of the ark, the family which found safety in it, the place where it rested, the erection of the tower of Babel, the confusion of tongues, the dispersion of mankind, the division of the earth among the posterity of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, the generations of

the postdiluvian patriarchs, with the gradual shortening of human life after the flood, the sojournings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the descent of Jacob into Egypt, and the condition of Egypt at that period.

In the book of Exodus we have an account of the causes, the nature, and the number of the plagues of Egypt, the institution of the passover, the passage through the Red sea, the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, the continued miracle of manna, the victory over the Amalekites, the delivery of the Law from Mount Sinai, the laws, moral and ceremonial, which were afterwards issued, the worship of the golden calf, and a very minute description of the tabernacle, priests' garments, and the ark.—Leviticus contains a collection of ceremonial laws, and an account of the death of Nadab and Abihu.

26. In the book of Numbers we have a minute description of the first and second numbering of the several tribes, with their genealogies, the peculiar offices of the three several families of the Levites, the journeyings and encampments of the people in the wilderness during forty years, with the relation of some remarkable events that happened in this period.—The book of Deuteronomy contains a recapitulation of the particulars mentioned in the preceding books, with a second delivery of the law, chiefly the moral, by Moses, before his death, on the borders of Canaan.

27. Such minute and particular description, as to time, place, and person, is the characteristic, not of false, but of authentic documents. Accordingly, it is in general found that the measure of truth in any historical record is in proportion to the particularities related. No competent judge could doubt the authenticity of Cæsar's account of the war in Gaul, from the particulars of time, place, and persons, in which it abounds. A forger or fictitious writer would carefully avoid such an enumeration, as it would furnish the reader with the means of his detection. But we can scarcely conceive it possible that he could, even if he were inclined, compose a writing abounding in the particularities by which the Scriptures are characterised. Or, if such a thing were possible, the persons of those times when the books were published, must, by the help of these criteria, have detected and exposed the falsehoods. "For these criteria are so attested by allowed facts, as at this time, and in this remote corner of the world, to establish the

truth and genuineness of the Scriptures: Whence we may conclude, *à fortiori*, that they must have enabled the persons who were upon the spot when the books were published to do this; especially as the importance of many of the particulars recorded, as well as of many of the precepts, observances, and renunciations enjoined, would furnish them with abundant motives for this purpose." In connexion with these particulars, I observe,—

28. That the Pentateuch contains minute descriptions of injunctions and circumstances, necessary for the Israelites to observe in the situation in which they are said to have been placed, which, though they might be mentioned by an eye-witness, would not be noticed by a succeeding writer. We have, for example, a minute account of the manner in which the tabernacle was to be preserved; how it was to be taken down, and how carried in the wilderness during the sojournings of the children of Israel. The families and persons who were to take charge of particular parts are mentioned. Aaron, as high priest, and his family, had the charge of the furniture of the Holy of Holies; but it was to be carried during the march by the members of a different family; and these were not to approach till Aaron and his sons had made an end of covering them. It was natural and proper for Moses to mention these things; but it would not have occurred to a succeeding writer to describe them.

29. The circumstances of Israel during the forty years in which they sojourned in the wilderness were different; and we observe a corresponding difference in the manner of Moses in regard to them. When they are about to enter into the promised land, he speaks, as in the book of Deuteronomy, like a person who had been present during the whole of their preceding course, and who now takes a retrospective view of the events he had witnessed. This change of manner is striking; but suited to the change of circumstances. Would a subsequent writer have mentioned the character of the great lawgiver and leader in the simple manner in which it is here alluded to? Is it natural to suppose that one who would aim at pleasing his readers by exalting Moses, would candidly state his errors, or have related so fully and impartially the disobedient and ungrateful treatment which he had received from their ancestors?

30. The manner and the sentiments of the Pentateuch are

those of the age in which Moses lived. In every period of a nation's history there are certain occurrences, certain great facts, which will affect the style of thinking and of expression peculiar to that particular age. This peculiarity of thought and of expression is observable in different writers according to the periods in which they have flourished. The Pentateuch throughout is in entire accordance with the time in which Moses lived, and the circumstances in which he was placed.

31. To the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch thus established, two objections have been advanced: First, That in the end of it mention is made of the death of Moses. But this does not derogate from the authenticity, genuineness, and authority of the Mosaic record; since it was probably added by Joshua, in order to connect it with the following book, which bears his name. The second objection is, that there are names of towns of a more modern date than the time of Moses. To this it is answered, that it was customary after the captivity to read the books of Moses in the synagogues in the original language accompanied with an interpretation. In room of words not well known or obsolete, it was natural to put on the margin words which might afterwards be introduced into the text. So far is the insertion of two or three such expressions from impeaching the genuineness of the Pentateuch, that, on the contrary, it confirms it; since, if this had been a compilation long subsequent to the events which it records, the entire history would have been composed with the same ideas and views as these additions were.

32. The genuineness and authenticity of the books of the Old Testament in general, and of Moses in particular, have thus been fully proved. I have directed my chief attention to the authenticity of the books of Moses: 1st, Because this being established with regard to them, that of the other books of the Old Testament follows of course; these writings being mutually and immediately dependent on each other: and, 2dly, Because the Mosaic record being the basis of the Jewish dispensation, which was preparatory and introductory to Christianity, it will follow, that if that ancient dispensation was not of divine authority, neither is the Christian.

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## CHAPTER III.

## ON THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. As the origin and nature of Christianity are to be learned from the writings which compose the New Testament, it is an object of primary importance to ascertain their genuineness and authenticity.

2. The reality of the facts on which Christianity is founded is demonstrably certain. For if we suppose the New Testament to have been written at a period much later than that in which it is affirmed these facts took place; and that the story was framed and imposed on the world as an authentic account of persons and events which had no real existence; what could have led those concerned in such a forgery to have stated so many things discreditable to themselves, and in the estimation of the world disadvantageous to their cause? On the supposition that the story was altogether of their own making, why should they have made the poverty, the condemnation, and ignominious death of their Master occupy so prominent a place? These things, as they perfectly knew, must have made an impression on mankind most unfavourable to the reception of the new religion: and as they had it in their power to omit or insert what they pleased, it is clear that the rejection and crucifixion of their leader would never have been admitted.

3. If, on the other hand, it be alleged, that when the New Testament was composed, the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish rulers, his condemnation by the Roman governor, and his crucifixion as a malefactor, were so notorious, that the writers, in order to maintain the appearance of consistency, were obliged to state them;—this is to acknowledge the reality of the leading facts on which Christianity is founded. Indeed, these facts were admitted, during at least the first four centuries of the Christian era, by the enemies as well as by the friends of the gospel: namely, That the Author of Christianity, who had many followers during his own life, was crucified at Jerusalem when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; that his disciples, notwithstanding, continued to believe in him, and publicly asserted that he had risen from the dead: that their numbers continued to increase, and were soon spread from Judea to the utmost limits of the Roman empire; that they universally abhorred every other form of

religion, but that which they received from Christ; that the Christians made numerous converts wherever they went; that they assembled on a certain day in every week to worship him who was crucified in Palestine, and to sing hymns to him as to a God; that they then bound themselves by an oath to abstain from theft, adultery, and every other crime,—never to violate promises, or to refuse restitution of goods committed to their custody; that their first Lawgiver had taught them to regard one another as brethren, and that they were closely attached to one another; that when their faith was in question, rather than renounce it, they resigned themselves without resistance to sufferings and to death itself; and that, in some of the provinces, a few years after the death of Christ, the governors reported to the emperors, that Christianity had made such an impression on the cities, towns, and villages, as to produce in many of them a general desertion of the heathen temples. I observe, then,—

4. (I.) The books of the New Testament, twenty-seven in number, written by eight different authors, who were contemporary with Jesus Christ, and which contain the history of our Lord, the doctrines and precepts of his religion, and an account of its first propagation in the world, we receive as the genuine writings of those whose names they bear, for the same reason that we receive the compositions of Xenophon, Cæsar, and Tacitus, because we have the uninterrupted testimony of all intervening ages to their genuineness, and have no ground to suspect imposition. Indeed, we have far stronger evidence for the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, than can be produced for that of the best classic authors. The authenticity of the former was admitted at the period when they first appeared, and that by persons who were acquainted with the penmen. The nature of the style, in place of contradicting this testimony, confirms it. Enemies of every degree of bitterness, as well as friends, never expressed a doubt on the subject.

5. (II.) The facts on which Christianity is founded, and the record of which we have in the New Testament, were admitted from the commencement of the Christian era. The testimony of Tacitus is well known.\* He confirms the state-

\* After a description of the terrible fire at Rome in the tenth year of Nero's reign, and the sixty-fourth of our Lord, in which a large part of the City was consumed, Tacitus adds:—

"But neither all human help, nor the liberality of the Emperor, nor all the atonements presented to the gods, availed to abate the infamy he lay under of

ments of Scripture regarding the following facts:—That Judea was a Roman province in the reign of Tiberius,—that Pilate was the procurator,—that Christ was put to death by Pilate,—that the Christian doctrine soon spread over Judea,—that, in the time of Nero, the Christians were very numerous,—that Christ was the founder of that sect, and that they were generally hated, and subjected to extreme sufferings on account of their religion.

Suetonius, Pliny, and Lucian, accord with that of Tacitus. The account which these celebrated heathen writers give of Christianity, agrees in every material point with that of the evangelists. While they speak of it in opprobrious terms, they acknowledge the reality of the fact in which it had its origin, and the rapid and powerful influence which it acquired over the minds of multitudes. Tacitus speaks of the followers of Jesus as a people who were commonly known by the name of Christians, who were so called from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by the procurator, Pontius Pilate; that Christianity, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, where it had its rise, but as far as Rome, where, in the tenth or eleventh year of Nero, Christians were very numerous.

6. The letter of Pliny the younger to Trajan has been often quoted.\* That epistle proves that Christians were then no

having ordered the city to be set on fire. To suppress therefore this common rumour, Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted exquisite punishment upon those people, who were in abhorrence for their crimes, and were commonly known by the name of Christians. They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal, by the Procurator, Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread, not only over Judea, the source of this evil, but reached the city also; whither flow from all quarters things vile and shameful, and where they find shelter and encouragement. At first, those only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect: afterwards, a vast multitude discovered by them, all which were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their enmity to mankind. Their executions were so contrived as to expose them to derision and contempt. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs; some were crucified; others, having been daubed over with combustible materials, were set up as lights, in the night time, and thus burned to death. Nero made use of his own gardens, as a theatre, upon this occasion, and also exhibited the diversions of the Circus; sometimes standing in the crowd, as a spectator, in the habit of a charioteer; at other times driving a chariot himself: till, at length, these men, though really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment, began to be commiserated, as people who were destroyed, not out of a regard to the public welfare, but only to gratify the cruelty of one man."

\* In the year 107, when Pliny the Younger was governor of Pontus and Bithynia, he sent the following epistle to the Emperor Trajan, whose reply is subjoined:—

obscure sect, that many of every age and rank bore this name; and that they were so numerous in Pontus and Bithynia, as

“Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, wishes health and happiness.

“It is my constant custom, Sir, to refer myself to you in all matters concerning which I have any doubt: for who can better direct me where I hesitate, or instruct me where I am ignorant? I have never been present at any trial of Christians; so that I know not well what is the subject-matter of punishment or of inquiry, or what strictness ought to be used in either. Nor have I been a little perplexed to determine whether any difference ought to be made upon account of age, or whether the young and tender, and the full-grown and robust, ought to be treated all alike; whether repentance should entitle to pardon, or whether all who have once been Christians ought to be punished, though they are now no longer so; whether the name itself although no crimes be detected, or crimes only belonging to the name, ought to be punished. Concerning all these things I am in doubt.

“In the meantime, I have taken this course with all who have been brought before me, and have been accused as Christians. I have put the question to them, whether they were Christians. Upon their confessing to me that they were, I repeated the question a second and a third time, threatening also to punish them with death. Such as still persisted, I ordered away to be punished: for it was no doubt with me, whatever might be the nature of their opinion, that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished. There were others of the same infatuation, whom, because they are Roman citizens, I have noted down to be sent to the city.

“In a short time, the crime spreading itself, even while under persecution, as is usual in such cases, divers sorts of people came in my way. An information was presented to me, without mentioning the author, concerning the names of many persons, who upon examination denied that they were Christians, or had ever been so; who repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and with wine and frankincense made supplication to your image, which for that purpose I have caused to be brought and set before them, together with the statues of the deities. Moreover, they reviled the name of Christ. None of which things, as is said, they who are really Christians can by any means be compelled to do. These therefore I thought proper to discharge.

“Others were named by an informer, who at first confessed themselves Christians, but had left them; some three years ago, some longer, and one or more above twenty years. They all worshipped your image, and the statues of the gods: these also reviled Christ. They affirmed that the whole of their fault or error lay in this, that they were wont to meet together one stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as a God, and bind themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but, not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word; not to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it. When these things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal which they ate in common without any disorder; but this they had forborne since the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I prohibited assemblies.

“After receiving this account, I judged it the more necessary to examine, and that by torture, two maidservants, which were called ministers; but I have discovered nothing beside a bad and excessive superstition.

“Suspending, therefore, all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice: for it has appeared unto me a matter highly deserving consideration, especially on account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering: for many of all ages, and every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless it seems to me, that it may be restrained



to have caused the usual sacrifices to be neglected, and the temples to be deserted. It also mentions that Christians were wont to meet together, on a stated day, and worship Christ as God. Lucian says of them, that their first Lawgiver taught them that they are all brethren, when once they have turned and renounced the gods of the Greeks, and worship this Master of theirs who was crucified, and engage to live according to his laws. The testimonies of all ancient heathen writers, however brief and incidental their notices are, confirm the gospel history. Their allusions to Christianity, in every case in which they allude to it, assume the certain reality of the facts on which it is founded. Even their silence may be viewed as confirmatory of the truth; for in their writings there is no vestige of an account of the origin and nature of Christianity, different from that which is given by the evangelists. It is not like the death of Cyrus the Great, a competition between opposite accounts, or between the credit of different historians. There is not a document, or scrap of account, either contemporary with the commencement of Christianity, or extant within many ages after that commencement, which assigns a history substantially different from ours.

7. There is another class of unexceptionable witnesses to the reality of the facts on which Christianity is founded, and to the authenticity and genuineness of the New Testament, namely, the earliest writers in opposition to Christianity. They neither question the leading facts of the gospel history, nor that these facts were made known to the Christians by the sacred writings.

8. The principal adversaries who wrote against the Christian religion in the first four centuries, are Celsus, Porphyry, and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented: and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims likewise are every where bought up, whereas for some time there were few purchasers. Whence it is easy to imagine what numbers of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to those who shall repent."

Here follows the Emperor's answer:—

"Trajan to Pliny, wisheth health and happiness.

"You have taken the right method, my Pliny, in your proceedings with those who have been brought before you as Christians: for it is impossible to establish any one rule that shall hold universally. They are not to be sought for. If they are brought before you, and are convicted, they ought to be punished. However, he who denies being a Christian, and makes it evident in fact, that is, by supplicating to our gods, though he be suspected to have been so formerly, let him be pardoned upon repentance. But in no case of any crime whatever may a bill of information be received without being signed by him who presents it; for that would be a dangerous precedent, and unworthy of my government."

Hierocles, and Julian. The three former wrote within the compass of the first three centuries, and before the establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire by Constantine: Celsus, who lived in the middle of the second century, was the first who wrote with the avowed design of refuting Christianity. The period which he chose for this purpose was a time of persecution. His works are lost; and the only remaining fragments have been preserved in eight books of Origen, which he wrote against him. As Celsus undertook a laboured argument against the Christians, and as he wrote so late as the time of Marcus Antoninus, when they were openly persecuted, and rendered better known by the persecution, which they endured, and by the apologies which were made for them, we may reasonably expect to find in his work the most valuable testimony to the books of the New Testament. He accordingly admits not only the facts to which the gospel history relates, but he reasons on the conclusions deduced from them, and thus acknowledges the authenticity and genuineness of the narratives which are transmitted to us in the Christian Scriptures. He refers to these Scriptures generally, and to numerous particular texts which he quotes from them.

9. He distinctly admits that Jesus was the author of the Christian institution, and that he had lived and taught not long before his time. We also learn from him, that, according to the accounts given by his disciples, he was born of a virgin, in a small village of Judea,—that Chaldeans, or other wise men from the east, came to Jerusalem, soon after his nativity, to do him homage as king of the Jews, having been excited to that journey by the appearance of a star; that Herod, moved by jealousy, put to death many young children, hoping to kill Jesus with them,—that, by direction of an angel, he was carried by his parents into Egypt for the preservation of his life. He calls Jesus the man of Nazareth, from the place where he was brought up, and chiefly resided. He takes notice of our Lord's baptism, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove, and of a voice from heaven, declaring Jesus to be the Beloved Son of God. In another place, he speaks again of a like voice from heaven, which seems to be what happened when our Lord was transfigured on the mount. He afterwards takes notice, that when Jesus appeared in a public character, as a teacher of religion, he went about attended by ten or twelve disciples. In the history of

Jesus, written by his disciples, he is said to have healed the lame and the blind, and to have raised some dead persons to life; and though he is unwilling to allow that these were real miracles wrought by the power of God, he denies not their truth, but, in order to account for them, is forced to attribute them to the influence of magic. He mentions our Lord's death on the cross, and all the circumstances of his last sufferings; that he was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, condemned by a judge, and prosecuted by the Jews,—that he was derided, reproached, crowned with thorns, clothed with purple, and had a reed put into his hand,—that the soldiers offered wine mingled with gall when he was going to be crucified, and vinegar when he was near expiring on the cross. He also alludes to the darkness which happened during our Lord's crucifixion, and to the earthquake which took place about the same time. Though he will not admit that Jesus rose from the dead, he acknowledges that his disciples affirmed it, and maintained that an angel descended and removed the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and that he is said by them to have shown himself to one woman, then to others, and to his disciples. He also observes, that the disciples have recorded that Jesus foreknew and foretold the things that happened to himself, and which were to happen to them also after he had left them. We have thus in Celsus the substance of the whole history of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels.

10. The use I would make of all this is, that it appears with most decisive evidence, by the testimony of one of the most malicious and virulent adversaries which the Christian religion ever had, and who was also a man of considerable parts and learning, that the writings of the evangelists were extant in his time, and universally received by Christians as credible and divine; and that those accounts were written by Christ's own disciples, and consequently that they were written in the very age in which the facts there related were done, and when, therefore, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have convicted them of falsehood if they had not been true. "Who can forbear," says the pious Doddridge, "adoring the depth of the divine wisdom in laying such a firm foundation for our faith in the gospel history, in the writings of one who was so inveterate an enemy to it, and so indefatigable in his attempts to overthrow it?"

11. Porphyry, another inveterate enemy of Christianity, who lived in the third century, admitted the truth of the facts recorded in the gospel. "He possessed," says Michaelis, "every advantage which natural abilities or political situation could afford, to discover whether the New Testament was a genuine work of the apostles and evangelists, or whether it was imposed upon the world after the decease of its pretended authors. But no trace of this suspicion is any where to be found, nor did it ever occur to Porphyry to suppose that it was spurious."

12. Hierocles, who lived early in the fourth century, bears testimony to the existence of the several parts of the New Testament. In the imperial edict for Diocletian's persecution, which was issued in the year 303, it was expressly ordered, not only that the Christian churches should be demolished, but also that their scriptures should be burned. This was the first time that any such order was published by any of the heathen persecuting emperors, a circumstance which proves, as Lardner observes, not merely that the Scriptures were then in existence, but that the pagans were well aware that from those Scriptures the Christians derived the knowledge of the facts, doctrines, and institutions, of their religion, the rule of their conduct, and the foundation of their faith and hope. The genuineness of the books of the New Testament is admitted by Hierocles, who refers to six at least of the eight writers of these books; so that we are assured that the Scriptures which are now received by us are the same which were received by the Christians of that time, and which they received as genuine and authentic from their ancestors.

13. Julian, the bitter enemy of the Christian cause in the fourth century, bears testimony to the history, and to the books of the New Testament; recites the sayings of our Lord in the very words of the evangelists; states the dates of these records, and calls them by the names they now bear, without questioning their genuineness. He allows that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, at the time of the taxing made in Judea by Cyrenius,—that the Christian religion had its rise, and began to be propagated, in the times of the emperors Tiberius and Claudius. He bears witness to the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Acts of the Apostles; and he so quotes them as to intimate that these were the only historical books received by Christians as of authority, and the only authentic memoirs



of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and the doctrines preached by them. He allows their early date, and even argues for it. He also quotes, or plainly refers to, the Epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Galatians. He does not deny the miracles of Jesus Christ, but allows him to have healed the blind, and the lame, and demoniacs, and to have rebuked the winds, and walked upon the waves of the sea. So that, upon the whole, he has undesignedly borne witness to the truth of many things recorded in the New Testament; he aimed to overthrow the Christian religion, but has confirmed it; his arguments against it are perfectly harmless, and insufficient to unsettle the weakest Christian.

14. Thus, we have the testimony of men of learning and inquiry, enemies to Christianity, to the authenticity and genuineness of the New Testament Scriptures. Such testimony is the more valuable, that the persons who gave it were eager and well qualified to avail themselves of any circumstances, had any such existed, by which they might awaken suspicion of the genuineness of the sacred writings. This testimony is peculiarly strong in the case of Porphyry, who attacked the prophecy of Daniel on the ground of spuriousness, to whose mind, therefore, this train of objections was familiar, and who would not have failed, had he found any reasons for doing so, to call in question the authenticity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. From his general acquaintance with Christians, and his knowledge of the Greek and Syriac languages, he possessed the literary talent, and the most favourable opportunities, for writing against the credibility of these books, had it been possibly in his power, with any appearance of plausibility, to have done so. Julian also, in consequence of his early employment as a Scripture reader in the Christian church and his general learning, must have been well acquainted with the New Testament Scriptures: his situation at the head of the government gave him access to every source of information; and his bitter enmity to Christianity, sharpened as it was by personal resentment, made him eager to avail himself of all the power and the opportunity which were thus at his command, for discrediting the truth of the gospel history, and the genuineness of its records: his not having attempted to do so, but, on the contrary, admitting the authenticity and genuineness of these records, furnishes the most complete and convincing evidence that the books of the

New Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear, and that the facts narrated in them are real.

15. I have yet to notice the testimony of a third class of witnesses to the authenticity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament;—I mean the Fathers of the Christian church, by whom they are quoted in regular succession from the apostolic times. On this subject it is justly observed by Dr. Paley, that when Christian advocates merely tell us that we have the same reason for believing the Gospels to have been written by the evangelists whose names they bear, as we have for believing the Commentaries to be Cæsar's, the *Æneid* Virgil's, or the Orations Cicero's, they content themselves with an imperfect representation. They state nothing more than what is true, but they do not state the truth correctly. In the number, variety, and early date of our testimonies, we far exceed all ancient books. For one which the most celebrated work of the most celebrated Greek or Roman writer can allege, we can produce many. Bishop Burnet (for example), in the *History of his Own Times*, inserts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's history. One such insertion is a proof that Lord Clarendon's history was extant at the time when Bishop Burnet wrote,—that it had been read by Bishop Burnet,—that it was received by him as a work of Lord Clarendon, and also regarded by him as an authentic account of the transactions which it relates: and it will be a proof of these points a thousand years hence, or as long as the books exist. Quintilian having quoted as Cicero's that well-known trait of dissembled vanity:—"Si quid est in me ingenii, Judices, quod sentio quam sit exiguum:" the quotation would be strong evidence, were there any doubt that the oration which opens with this address actually came from Cicero's pen. These instances, however simple, may serve to point out to the reader, who is little accustomed to such researches, the nature and value of the argument.

16. The Scripture quotations found in the writings of the Fathers are in various forms. Sometimes the names, and sometimes the words, of the sacred writers are mentioned; and what is of importance to be noticed, the quotations from the books of the New Testament are addressed to persons who admitted the authenticity and genuineness of these books: And the testimony of the Fathers, therefore, is in reality the testimony of the numerous persons for whose use their writings were intended.

17. The Apostolic Fathers, so called from their having been closely connected with the apostolic age, are Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who all are witnesses of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, and of the reality of the facts recorded in them. In the writings of these apostolical fathers, there is all the notice taken of the books of the New Testament that could be expected. Barnabas, though so early a writer, appears to have been acquainted with the Gospel of St. Matthew. Clement, writing in the name of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth, on occasion of some dissension there, desires them to take into their hands the epistle of the blessed apostle Paul, written to them; and refers them particularly to a part of that epistle in which he admonished them against strife and contention. He has likewise, in his epistle, undeniable allusions to Paul's epistle written to the church over which he presided, and in whose name he wrote. Hermas makes such allusions to the books of the New Testament as were suitable to his design. Ignatius, writing to the church of Ephesus, takes notice of the epistle of Paul written to them, in which he makes mention of them in Christ Jesus. Lastly, Polycarp, writing to the Philippians, refers them to the epistle of the blessed Paul written to them: if not also to the epistles sent to the Thessalonians, Christians of the same province. He makes, besides, numerous and manifest allusions to other books of the New Testament. It is evident that these venerable fathers have not omitted to take notice of any book of the New Testament which their design led them to mention. Their silence, therefore, about any other books can be no prejudice to their genuineness. Besides, that is sufficiently attested by other credible testimonies.

18. But what shall I say of the numerous and unexceptionable witnesses which come under the notice of the historian of Christianity from the apostolic age downwards through the lapse of time? What shall we say to the continuity of this testimony given by so many in every succeeding age, and in circumstances so trying to their integrity and fidelity? To this public duty to the truth, which the followers of Christ have discharged in their successive generations, and often at the expense of their lives, the world is indebted for the preservation and transmission of the precious blessing of the glorious gospel. We have express, positive, and cumulative evidence, that the books of the New Testament were written by those

whose names they bear, even the apostles of Jesus Christ, who was crucified at Jerusalem in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, when Pontius Pilate was governor in Judea. It is the concurring testimony of early and later ages, and of writers of all countries in the several parts of the known world, Europe, Asia, and Africa:—It is the testimony of those called heretics, as well as of the orthodox: These books were received from the beginning with the greatest respect, and have been publicly and solemnly read in the assemblies of Christians throughout the world in every age from that time to this. They were early translated into the languages of different countries and people:—they were quoted by way of proof in all arguments of a religious nature, and were appealed to on both sides in all points of controversy that arose among Christians themselves: they were likewise recommended to the perusal of others as containing the authentic account of the Christian doctrine; and many commentaries have been written upon them, to explain and illustrate them: All which affords full assurance of their genuineness and integrity. If these books had not been written by those to whom they are ascribed, and if the things related in them had not been true, they could not have been received from the beginning: If they contain a true account of things the Christian religion is from God, and is of divine authority.

19. With the view of diminishing, if not of nullifying, the impression which this evidence must produce on every serious and attentive mind, it has been said that apocryphal gospels were composed in the early days of Christianity. Undoubtedly, there were such books composed, published, and read, immediately after the apostolic age: but this fact only confirms the truth of the evangelical history. Every one who observes that these books are called gospels of Peter, Paul, Thomas, Matthias, Bartholomew, or Acts of Paul, Andrew, John, and other apostles, must suppose that the composers did not intend to disparage them. On the contrary, they had great respect for them, and knew that other Christians had the same reverence for them; therefore, by recording traditions which they pretended to have received concerning the discourses and miracles of Christ and his apostles, they endeavoured to recommend some particular opinions which they had embraced. Serapion, bishop of Antioch, about the year 200, in his censure of the gospel of Peter, says, Having read it over, we have found that the main part of the book is agreeable to the right doctrine of our Saviour.



20. The publication of these apocryphal books was very much owing to the fame of Christ and his apostles. The many narrations or short histories, referred to by St. Luke in the introduction to his gospel, were owing probably to an honest zeal for Christ; and the composers supposed that their histories would be acceptable to many who had heard of Jesus, and believed in him: but being defective, they were soon laid aside; and the gospels of the four evangelists, when published, were universally received by the faithful as the authentic histories of Jesus Christ.

21. The apocryphal gospels and acts published afterwards, were also owing to the fame of Christ and his apostles, and the great success of their ministry. In the second century the philosophical converts to Christianity brought with them their philosophical principles; and having been used to schemes of philosophy, they formed to themselves a scheme of religion different from that commonly received among Christians. These peculiar opinions they endeavoured to support by philosophical reasonings; and in order to recommend them, they laid hold of such traditions concerning Christ and his apostles, though groundless, as were at all favourable to them. These, with fictitious discourses and histories of their own invention, they inserted into a volume, which they published with the title of the Gospel, Acts, or Travels, of some apostle. To this it is owing, that in so many of this sort of books may be observed the doctrine of two principles, the evil nature of matter, and other errors. "No writings," says Augustine, "ever had a better testimony afforded them, than those of the apostles and evangelists: nor does it weaken the credit and authority of books received by the church from the beginning, that some other writings have been without ground, and falsely ascribed to the apostles: for the like has happened, for instance, to Hippocrates; but yet his genuine works have been distinguished from others which have been published under his name." Nearly all the great writers of antiquity have had books ascribed to them which were not theirs.

22. The early Christians received with the greatest caution books attributed to the inspired penmen. It was in consequence of this extreme caution that for some time the epistle to the Hebrews, some of the catholic epistles, and the Revelation, were doubted of by many, when other books of the New Testament were universally acknowledged:—And we

have all the satisfaction that can be reasonably desired that the books received by them were received upon good ground, and that others were as justly rejected.

23. "On a point of ordinary history," says Dr. Chalmers, "the testimony of Tacitus is held decisive because it is not contradicted. The history of the New Testament is not only not contradicted, but confirmed by the strongest possible expressions which men can give of their acquiescence in its truth; by thousands who were either agents or eyewitnesses of the transactions recorded, who could not be deceived, who had no interest, and no glory to gain by supporting a falsehood, and who, by their sufferings in the cause of what they professed to be their belief, gave the highest evidence that human nature can give of sincerity.—In the New Testament itself—in the concurrence of its numerous, and distinct, and independent authors—in the uncontradicted authority which it has maintained from the earliest times of the church—in the total inability of the bitterest adversaries of our religion to impeach its credibility—in the genuine characters of honesty and fairness which it carries on the very face of it; in these, and in everything else, which can give validity to the written history of past times, there is a weight and a splendour of evidence, which the testimony of Tacitus cannot confirm, and which the absence of that testimony could not have diminished."

24. From the foregoing observations it appears, First, That the books of the New Testament were regarded from the time in which they were given to the world as possessed of divine authority. They were spoken of as "divine oracles,—the Scriptures of the Lord." Secondly, They were at a very early period read and expounded in the assemblies of Christians. Justin Martyr, in the account which he gave to the emperor (about 140) of the worship of the Christians, observes, that "the memoirs of the apostles or writings of the prophets are read, according as the time allows." Thirdly, in the primitive ages of the church, translations of the sacred writings were made into different languages. One of these, the old Syriac, is as early as the first century. Fourthly, The church was agreed as to what really were the genuine and authentic books of the New Testament. The earliest catalogue of these books, namely, that which was furnished by Origen, exactly accords with our New Testament list. Tertullian, who was born about the middle of the second century, has long quotations from

nearly all the books of the New Testament : and, as Lardner has remarked, the quotations from that small volume by Tertullian are both longer and more numerous than the quotations are from all the works of Cicero, in writers of all characters, for several ages. He quotes from the writings of the New Testament as books universally received as genuine and authentic. Fifthly, Heretics admitted their genuineness and authenticity as well as the orthodox ; and both appealed to them in their controversies.

The genuineness of the books of the New Testament is evinced by citations from them in writings belonging to a period immediately contiguous to that in which they were published ; by the distinguished regard paid by early Christians to the authority of these books (which regard was manifested by their collecting of them into a volume, appropriating to that volume titles of peculiar respect, translating them into various languages, digesting into harmonies, writing commentaries upon them, and, still more conspicuously, by the reading of them in their public assemblies in all parts of the world) ; by a universal agreement with respect to these books, while doubts were entertained concerning some others ; by contending sects appealing to them ; by the early adversaries of the religion not disputing their genuineness, but, on the contrary, treating them as the depositaries of the history upon which the religion was founded ; by many formal catalogues of these, as of certain and authoritative writings, published in different and distant parts of the Christian world ; lastly, by the absence or defect of the above-cited topics of evidence, when applied to any other histories of the same subject.\*

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSISTENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES WITH THEMSELVES, AND WITH  
CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS.

1. THERE are two circumstances by which the Scriptures are characterised, which greatly aid us in deciding the question of their genuineness and authenticity. First, A great portion of these writings consists of a narrative of facts,—of a history which is continued with few interruptions from the creation

\* Paley's Evidences, vol. i. p. 307.

of man till the time of Malachi, the last of the prophets, and from the birth of Christ till the diffusion of Christianity, and the formation and enlargement of the Christian church. As the doctrines contained in the Old Testament are closely connected with its history, so the doctrines contained in the New are confirmed by a reference to the facts narrated in the Jewish and Christian revelations. This is a peculiarity which exclusively belongs to Scripture. Of no other religion which has ever offered itself to the attention of men could its truth be inferred from a consistent narrative of facts. Mohammedanism will not abide this test. But if we admit the truth of the history of the Jewish nation, and of the Christian religion and church, as recorded in the Scriptures, it will be impossible to deny the divine origin of the religion therein taught.

2. For it is obvious, that God alone could have brought to pass the events which the Bible records. We have therefore, in confirmation of the truth of the doctrines which these events were designed to convey, not merely the miracles which were wrought directly in attestation of the doctrines, but the whole series of miraculous interpositions narrated in the Scripture history. And then, by this method of communicating religious instruction, the means of confirming truth, or of detecting error, are greatly enlarged. The adoption of a method of conveying divine knowledge, so admirably adapted to men of all ranks, and all ages of the world, and which furnishes infallible means of exposing falsehood, is a strong presumption of the truth of that system of which it is characteristic. The religion of the Bible is so closely interwoven with the history of the Bible,—the former is so necessarily connected with the latter,—that if we can prove the truth of the Scripture narrative, we in fact establish the divine origin of the religion founded upon it.

3. Secondly, The other circumstance which greatly aids us in deciding the authenticity of the sacred writings, is the number of persons concerned in their composition. The Bible is a collection of books written at different times by different individuals. The New Testament is the work of eight different authors, who wrote without any appearance of concert, who published in different parts of the world, and whose writings possess every evidence, both internal and external, of being independent productions. Had only one author exhibited the same minute accuracy of allusion, it would have



been esteemed a very strong evidence of his antiquity. But when we see so many authors exhibiting such a well-sustained and almost unexcepted accuracy through the whole of their varied and distinct narratives, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion, that they were either the eyewitnesses of their own history, or lived about the period of its accomplishment.— Bearing these *two* important considerations in mind, we shall now direct our attention to the internal evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of Scripture.

4. (I.) The books of Scripture are consistent in regard to style, language, and other particulars, with the alleged character of the writers. That this is the case with the writers of the Old Testament is obvious to every one who is competent to read their compositions in the tongue in which they wrote. The eight persons who were the authors of the several books of the New Testament, were Jews, and witnesses of the events which they record. Accordingly, throughout their writings there are numerous allusions to the rites of the Jewish religion—to the phraseology of the Old Testament Scriptures—to the modes of thinking, and forms of expression, common among the Jews,—and to times, places, and persons which, on the supposition of the truth of their history, must have been known to them. They wrote like persons who were themselves eyewitnesses of the events which they record.

5. The language, too, in which they wrote was Greek; but Hebraic-Greek, that is, the Greek language intermixed with Hebrew and Syriac idioms,—tongues which were at that time spoken by the Jews of Palestine. It is the dialect which persons would have used who had been educated in a country where Chaldee or Syriac was the vernacular tongue, and whose knowledge of the Greek language was acquired. Thus, an Englishman who spoke or wrote French, could scarcely escape the introduction of some Anglicisms; or, a Highlander, whose native language is Gaelic, and to whom that language is most familiar, would be apt to mix Gallicisms with his conversation or writing in English. But the writers of the New Testament were not only Jews, they were also, with one exception, unlearned men, in humble stations; and they would therefore have little opportunity of acquiring, and be little solicitous to acquire, exemption from the idiomatic phraseology of their native dialect. We find, accordingly, that the language of the New Testament is such as we might expect from persons

in these circumstances; and not only so, but such as could not have been used by persons in a different situation from that of the apostles and evangelists; unless, as Bishop Marsh observes, some oriental dialect had been familiar to the persons who wrote the several books of the New Testament, they would not have been able to write that particular kind of Greek by which those books are distinguished from every classic author. Nor would this kind of language have appeared in the several books of the New Testament, even though the writers had lived in Judea, unless they had lived also in the same age with the apostles and evangelists. Judea itself could not have produced in the second century the compositions which we find in the New Testament. The destruction of Jerusalem, and the total subversion of the Jewish state, introduced new forms and new relations, as well in language as in policy. The language, therefore, of a fabrication attempted in the second century would have borne a different character from that of writings composed in the same country before the destruction of Jerusalem. And even if the dialect of a former age could have been successfully imitated, no inhabitant of Judea in the second century would have made the attempt. The Jews, who remained in that country, will hardly be suspected of such a fabrication; and the only Christians who remained there in the second century were the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. But the Nazarenes and the Ebionites used only one gospel, and that gospel was in Hebrew. They will hardly be suspected therefore of having forged Greek gospels. Nor can they be suspected of having forged Greek epistles, especially as the epistles of Paul were rejected by the Ebionites, not indeed as spurious, but as containing doctrines at variance with their peculiar tenets. But if Judea could not have produced in the second century such writings as we find in the New Testament, no other country could have produced them; for the Christians of the second century, who lived where Greek was the vernacular language, though their dialect might differ from the dialect of Athens, never used a dialect in which oriental phraseology was so mingled with Greek words as we find in the New Testament. The language, therefore, clearly shows that it could not have been written in any other age than in the first century, nor by any other persons than by persons in the situation of the apostles and evangelists.\*

\* Bishop Marsh's Lectures, part v. pp. 88—90.

6. There is not only an accordance between the language and style of the New Testament, and the situation of the persons to whom its different books are attributed, but there is also an accordance between these and the different dispositions of the writers. The composition of John is not more different from that of Paul than was the turn of mind of the latter different from the former. We see in the writings of Paul his characteristic zeal and animation,—in those of Peter his intrepidity and boldness,—and in those of John, the gentleness and kindness by which he was distinguished.

7. The evangelical phraseology by which the New Testament is characterised, is also in accordance with the character and circumstances of the writers. Similar terms are used by them all, and for this obvious reason, that they were all alike eye-witnesses of the facts in the life of Christ, and diffusion of his religion, to which the terms in question allude, and in which they had their origin. The coinage, if I may use the expression, of such phraseology, must have been the result of a belief in the miraculous events narrated in the gospel, accompanied with an intensity of interest such as the reality of those events alone could have inspired.

8. (II.) In the Scriptures there are evidences of the candour, truth, and honesty of the writers. Their plainness, simplicity, and sincerity of manner are such that no one, however sceptical, can avoid the impression that he is reading a statement of occurrences that have actually taken place. They give a minute and circumstantial detail of events that have happened in the world during a period of some thousand years. While their narrative begins prior to any authentic history, it advances to Egypt, then the most enlightened nation in the world,—to Phœnicia, inhabited by a commercial people,—to Assyria, Babylon, and Persia,—carries us to the metropolis of the world, Babylon itself; furnishes us with decrees which were issued by that mighty government to numerous nations,—describes the condition of the city on the night in which it fell into the hands of the Medes and Persians; it again conducts us to Palestine after it became a part of the Roman empire, and in recording the events connected with the life and death of our Lord, often refers to the civil and political circumstances of Judea. From Jerusalem this narrative leads us to the principal provinces of the empire, and minutely details miraculous and other events which took place in all the chief cities of the

world. In short, this narrative comes so much, and during so long a period, in contact with the history of all the great kingdoms of the world, as to have furnished innumerable points on which it had been easy to detect falsehood if falsehood had been attempted. But we shall find that its minutest incidents are confirmed by other testimony.

9. And then, the perfect candour of the sacred writers, a quality which impostors can neither possess nor exercise, but which is characteristic of the penmen of Scripture, claims our special notice. They record their own errors and sins, and those of their ancestors and relations, with artless simplicity and fidelity. The father of the Hebrew nation, the legislator of the chosen people,—the prophets and apostles,—are represented as indicating the infirmities of human nature. Nor is the cowardice with which all the disciples forsook their Master and fled, or the oaths and curses with which Peter denied him, omitted. There is no attempt to palliate sin by whomsoever committed. There is no appearance of a wish on the part of the writers to avoid mentioning the failings of the most distinguished of themselves, or of their friends, on account of the manner in which they might affect their reputation. Would deceivers or enthusiasts maintain such impartiality? Nay, could fidelity so unparalleled be found in men who were not under the guidance of divine power?

10. In connexion with their candour and simplicity, we observe a total absence of desire to produce effect. In narrating events in regard to which it would have been impossible for an ordinary writer to abstain from giving a comment, we meet with no embellishment, and no such impassioned representation as the occasion might seem to require. While there is indicated throughout a deep sense of the infinite importance of the truths which they record, there is an entire absence of human passion,—a withdrawment of themselves in the simple statement of their subject; this they present to the reader without colouring, without elaborate elucidation, and without any expression of wonder. The impression produced is owing not to the skill, but altogether to the veracity of the writers. They describe the character of the Great Personage whose kingdom and glories are the burden of their narrative, without any panegyric. They record the most stupendous events without a single expression of their admiration. While they tell us that Jesus wept, there is no appeal made to the sympathy



of the reader; while they mention that he is betrayed, they do not expatiate on the enormity of the crime; while they record his condemnation, they make no remark on the iniquity of the sentence; while they state the fact of the crucifixion, they give no comment on the event, for the purpose of expressing their sorrow, and awakening the feelings of the reader. Is it possible to resist the conviction which this manner, so peculiar to the sacred writers, is fitted to produce in favour of the truth and authenticity of the Scriptures, and not of their authenticity only, but of their divine authority?

11. (III.) The Scriptures are consistent with the manners, customs, and historical facts of the different ages in which they were written, and with the circumstances in which the sacred writers were placed.

12. Experience confirms the remark, that there is always some truth where there are considerable particularities related, and that they always seem to bear some proportion to one another. Thus, Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War, and Cæsar's of the War in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and persons, are mentioned, are universally admitted to be strictly true.

13. The Scriptures possess, in a remarkable degree, this striking characteristic of truth. They abound in allusions to persons, time, place, and circumstances. The very particularity, for example, of Paul's epistles; the constant recurrence of names of persons and places, the frequent allusions to the incidents of his private life, and to the circumstances of his condition and history; and the connexion and parallelism of these with the same circumstances in the Acts of the Apostles, so as to enable us, for the most part, to confront them one with another, afford no inconsiderable proofs of the genuineness of the writings, and the reality of the transactions. For, as no advertency is sufficient to guard against slips and contradictions when circumstances are multiplied, and when they are liable to be detected by contemporary accounts equally circumstantial, an impostor, I should expect, would either have avoided particulars entirely, contenting himself with doctrinal discussions, moral precepts, and general reflections; or if, for the sake of imitating the style of Paul, he would have thought it necessary to interperse his composition with names and circumstances, he would have placed it out of reach of comparison with the history.

14. "I am confirmed in this opinion," says Dr. Paley, "by

the inspection of two attempts to counterfeit St. Paul's epistles, which have come down to us, and the only attempts of which we have any knowledge that are at all deserving of regard. One of these is an epistle to the Laodiceans, extant in Latin, and preserved by Fabricius, in his collection of Apocryphal Scriptures. The other purports to be an epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in answer to an epistle from the Corinthians to him. In the first of these, I found, as I expected, a total evitiation of circumstances. It is simply a collection of sentences from the canonical epistles, strung together with very little skill. The second, which is a more specious forgery, is introduced with a list of names of persons who wrote to St. Paul from Corinth; but they are names which no one ever heard of. It is not necessary for me to point out the internal marks of spuriousness and imposture which these compositions betray."

15. In the Acts of the Apostles we have a professed history of the conversion and labours, in the diffusion of Christianity, of the Apostle Paul. Fourteen of the epistles contained in the New Testament are said to have been written by him. Dr. Paley has shown, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, without assuming the genuineness either of the history or of the letters, that the numerous undesigned coincidences of the different writings furnish a very strong argument to prove that the persons and transactions have been real, the letters authentic, and the narration true. It is indeed certain, that agreement or conformity between letters bearing the name of an ancient author, and a received history of that author's life, does not necessarily establish the credit of either; because the history may, like Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, or Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*, have been wholly, or in part, compiled from the letters, in which case it is manifest that the history adds nothing to the evidence already afforded by the letters; or, the letters may have been fabricated out of the history,—a species of imposture which is certainly practicable, and which, without any accession of proof or authority, would necessarily produce the appearance of consistency and agreement; or, the history and letters may have been founded upon some authority common to both,—as upon reports and traditions which prevailed in the age in which they were composed, or upon some ancient record now lost, which both writers consulted; in which case also, the letters, without being genuine, may exhibit marks of conformity with

the history; and the history, without being true, may agree with the letters.

16. In these three cases there is *design*. In examining, therefore, the agreement between ancient writings, the character of truth is *undesignedness*. The more circuitous the investigation is, by which the coincidence is established, the better, because the agreement which finally results is thereby further removed from the suspicion of contrivance or design.

17. It would be improper to overlook this valuable source of evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament Scriptures. It is only necessary for me, however, to refer to the admirable work of Dr. Paley on the subject. As an illustration of this mode of inference, I shall select two specimens:—

2 Timothy iii. 15: “And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.”

This verse discloses a circumstance which agrees exactly with what is intimated in Acts xvi. 1, where it is recorded of Timothy’s mother that she was a Jewess. This description is virtually, though, I am satisfied, undesignedly, recognised, in the epistle, when Timothy is reminded in it, “that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures.” The Holy Scriptures undoubtedly meant the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The expression bears that sense in every place in which it occurs. Those of the New had not yet acquired the name, not to mention that, in Timothy’s childhood, probably none of them existed. In what manner, then, could Timothy have known from a child the Jewish Scriptures, had he not been born on one side or both of Jewish parentage?”

18. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11: “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

“At Antioch, in Pisidia, where Paul delivered a memorable discourse, which is preserved in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, the history relates, that ‘the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came into Iconium. But the multitude of the city was divided, and part held with the Jews, and part

with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them, they were aware of it, and fled into Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and into the region that lieth round about, and there they preached the gospel. And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe; and when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch.' We have so far a conformity between the history and the allusion in the epistle, that St. Paul is asserted in the history to have suffered persecutions in the three cities, his persecutions at which are appealed to in the epistle; and not only so, but to have suffered these persecutions both in immediate succession, and in the order in which the cities are mentioned in the epistle. The conformity also extends to another circumstance. In the apostolic history, Lystra and Derbe are commonly mentioned together; in the quotation from the epistle, Lystra is mentioned and not Derbe, and the distinction will appear on this occasion to be accurate, for St. Paul is here enumerating his persecutions; and although he underwent grievous persecutions in each of the three cities through which he passed to Derbe, at Derbe itself he met with none. 'The next day he departed,' says the historian, 'to Derbe; and when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned to Lystra.' The epistle, therefore, in the names of the cities, in the order in which they are enumerated, and in the place at which the enumeration stops, corresponds exactly with the history.

19. "But how were these persecutions known to Timothy and why should the apostle recall these in particular to his remembrance, rather than many other persecutions with which his ministry had been attended? When some time, probably three years afterwards, St. Paul made a second journey through the same country, in order to go again and visit the brethren in every city where he had preached the word of the Lord, we read, Acts, chap. xvi. 1, that he 'came to Derbe and Lystra, and behold a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus.' One or other, therefore, of these cities was the place of



Timothy's abode. We read, moreover, that he was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium; so that he must have been well acquainted with these places. Also, again, when Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, Timothy was already a disciple: 'Behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus.' He must therefore have been converted before. But since it is expressly stated in the epistle, that Timothy was converted by Paul himself, that he was his own son in the faith; it follows that he must have been converted by him upon his former journey into those parts, which was the very time when the apostle underwent the persecutions referred to in the epistle. No wonder, then, that the apostle, though in a letter written long afterwards, should remind his favourite convert of those scenes of affliction and distress under which they first met."

20. A similar process has been successfully applied to the books of Moses. The book of Deuteronomy, which is a recapitulation of the contents of the three preceding books, has furnished the means, of which Dr. Graves has availed himself, of testing the truth of the Mosaic narrative. The events which are there recorded are mentioned in the book of Psalms; and there is another brief summary of the Old Testament history given by Stephen before the Jewish council.

21. We are informed by Moses in Exodus xviii. 17, that his father-in-law advised him to choose assistants to himself in judging the people, and that he chose them accordingly; but in the recapitulation of the law, Deut. i. 9, he says nothing of his father-in-law; on the contrary, he tells us that he complained of the burden to the people, and that he chose his assistants. The reason, however, is obvious to the attentive inquirer: In Exodus, Moses records a private conversation between himself and his father-in-law: whereas, in Deuteronomy, he addresses the people, and only notices his suggestion of the measure, and their adoption of it.

22. Again Moses tells us, in Numbers xiii., that the Lord directed him to send spies to the land of Canaan; while in Deut. i. 19 he informs us that the people suggested the measure. The reason of the apparent discrepancy is, that in Exodus Moses records the authority which he had for sending the spies; whereas in Deuteronomy he is addressing the people, and reminds them of the part they took in the transaction. Further, in Numbers xvi., we are told, that in consequence of the

rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, as they stood at their tents with their wives and their children, the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up; yet, in 1 Chron. vi. 22, we find a genealogy of the sons of Korah given for many generations. Now, it will be found, on a more careful perusal of the narrative, that neither Korah nor his children were swallowed up by the opening of the ground. He himself, with his company of two hundred and fifty Levites, were consumed by fire, but his children were preserved alive.

23. In this way all the seeming discrepancies of Scripture are solved; and thus an extensive and complicated narrative, drawn up by many individuals, and in different ages and circumstances, is proved by its perfect consistency to be authentic. The objections which have been advanced to its accuracy have only been the occasion of confirming its truth.

24. There is a similar connexion between the book of Psalms and the history of David, recorded in the two books of Samuel and the first book of Chronicles, to that between the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul; and the coincidence is perfect between the book of Psalms, the authorship of which is ascribed to David, and the history of the various circumstances of his life. But the limits prescribed to me do not permit me to enter on the consideration of the interesting views which a careful survey of this portion of Scripture would present of its truth and authenticity.

25. But there is yet another way in which we may put the veracity of the sacred writers to the test: it is the comparing of their narrative with contemporary authors. There are numerous allusions to historical facts, as well as to Jewish and Grecian customs, in the Scriptures. The accuracy of the sacred penmen, even where there is a seeming discrepancy, is complete.

26. For example, the evangelist Luke informs us, that certain soldiers came to John the Baptist, while he was preaching in the country about Jordan, and demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? It has been asked who these soldiers were, as it does not appear that the Roman soldiers, who were then stationed in Judea, were engaged in any war. Now it happens, that the word used by the evangelical historian denotes not soldiers, but soldiers under arms, marching to battle. Josephus tells us\* that Herod was at

\* Ant. Jud. lib. xviii. c. 5, sect. 1, 2.

that very time engaged in a war with his father-in-law, Aretas, whose daughter he had married, but who had returned to her father in consequence of Herod's ill-treatment. The army of Herod, then on its march from Galilee, passed of necessity through the country where John was baptizing; and the military men who questioned him were a part of that army.

27. We are told in the Acts of the Apostles, that when Paul entered Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. The Greek word signifies *full of idols*. Was this the case with Athens? Lucian says, "that every where were to be seen altars, and sacrifices, and temples : all the streets, and all assemblies were full of Jupiter." The sacred historian informs us, that "all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing." Demosthenes gives the same account of the Athenians. In one of his orations, in order to encourage them to act vigorously against the invader, he tells them "they had much more reason to expect the favour of the gods than he had, because they were more pious and just. But you will say, How then came he to have greater success in the former war than we had? The answer is, Because Philip acts the part of a soldier, endures fatigue, faces danger without any regard to the seasons of the year, and neglecting no opportunity; whilst we Athenians sit at home, doing nothing, always delaying, and making decrees, *and asking in the forum if there be anything new.*"

28. In short, the accuracy of the sacred historian, in all his allusions to persons, times, places, events, and circumstances, is confirmed by the testimony of Jewish and heathen authors. It would be exceedingly instructive to resume a comparison of the narrative of Luke with another class of authors who are equally entitled to credit with Jewish and heathen writers, I mean the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and John, and the penmen of the epistles.

29. In the history frequent mention is made of the baptism of John, the forerunner of our Lord; and the evangelists inform us that John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance. In the Acts, our Lord is represented as commanding his disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, assigning as the reason, that John truly baptized with water, but that they should be baptized not many days hence. In the Gospel of

Mark, John the Baptist says, "There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." We are told in the Acts that the preaching of Jesus began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached. The evangelists give a similar account of the place in which our Lord commenced his ministry. "After John was cast into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." It is said in the Acts, that the word preached by Jesus was published throughout all Judea: and that our Lord went about throughout Galilee and Judea, preaching the gospel, and healing all manner of diseases among the people,—forms the chief subject of the gospel narrative.

30. It is said in the Acts, that Jesus chose him apostles, and the names of the eleven, which were then living, are recorded. His choosing twelve apostles is particularly noticed by Mark; and both Matthew and Mark give us their names. They are represented in the Acts as having been with Christ from the beginning of his ministry, and as his witnesses to the people. And in the Gospel according to John, Jesus says to the twelve, "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

31. We read in the Acts that the apostle Peter gave strength and soundness to the lame, healed the paralytic, raised the dead, and that "by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one. In accordance with this statement we are informed by the evangelist Mark, that after the Lord had spoken unto them—the eleven apostles—he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

32. In this way the principal facts recorded in the narrative of Luke are confirmed by the testimony of other and independent authors. The reader will derive much assistance in this



investigation from Mr. Briscoe's work on the Acts of the Apostles.

33. In concluding this inquiry into the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, I may remark, that even though it had been impossible to ascertain the names of the persons by whom the different books of which the sacred volume consists were written, it might still have been traced, through continuous unexceptionable evidence, that they had been written at the very time when the whole facts which they record are stated to have come to pass, and published among the persons most interested, and best qualified to judge of the truth of the record; and had it appeared, as it might have done, from such evidence, that then and ever after they had been received as works of perfect authority, upon what ground could respect to that authority have been now withdrawn? We should then have had the very evidence for the qualifications of the writers, which, as the case stands, we have for their names; nor does it appear that a doubt could have been attached to it in the one case more justly than in the other. Yet it is gratifying to think that the question concerning the authenticity of the books of the New Testament is not destitute of the additional security which the names of the individual writers may be thought to carry along with them,—men who were well qualified for their task, as the intimate companions, or immediate disciples, of Him whose actions and words they relate.\*

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## CHAPTER V.

### ON THE UNCORRUPT PRESERVATION AND INTEGRITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

1. HAVING established by external and internal evidence the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, it only remains that we subjoin a few remarks on their uncorrupt preservation and integrity.

2. How does it appear that they have undergone no material change since the time in which they were written? Have they been transmitted to us without alteration or mutilation? We must decide this question concerning the integrity of the books of Scripture by means and on principles similar to those

\* Cook's Inquiry, &c. p. 150.

by which we determine the uncorrupted state of the text of any other ancient writing that has reached our times. And as a literary work can be considered as authentic only as it remains unadulterated, it is necessary to show that the books of Scripture now exist as they were originally written.

3. The original autograph manuscripts, which are now lost, would have soon ended the inquiry, had they remained to the present day. In the absence of the original autographs, we must have recourse to the copies which have been taken from these autographs; *secondly*, to quotations from the original, which, however valuable, are not fully equal to the original; and, *thirdly*, to versions in which the substance of the original may be contained without any material change or mutilation.

4. First, with regard to the Old Testament, it could not be corrupted or falsified either before or after the coming of Christ. Before that event the regard which was paid by the Jews to the Scriptures rendered a mutilation of them impossible. The tenure by which the Israelites held the land of Canaan, being founded on the law, gave them an interest in its pure preservation. The distribution of that people into twelve tribes,—the ordinance that rendered it imperative that the law should be read before all Israel at certain stated seasons;—and that required the priests to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by Moses, together with the commandment by which parents were enjoined to be familiar themselves with the law, and to teach it diligently to their children;—all rendered it impossible that the book of the law should have been corrupted. When, at a subsequent period, the people were divided into two kingdoms, the rivalry and enmity subsisting between them would prevent either of them from altering the Sacred Writings or adding to them. The reverence of the Jews for their Sacred Writings, according to the statements of Philo and Josephus, was so great, that they would suffer any torments rather than allow the slightest alteration of the Scriptures. Accordingly, the prophets and our Lord, while they sharply reprov'd the Jews for their sins, never charged them with falsifying or corrupting the Scriptures. On the contrary, Christ commanded them to search the Scriptures, and appealed to the books of the Old Testament as bearing testimony concerning him.

5. But if these books could not be corrupted before the

coming of Christ, neither could they be falsified or mutilated after that event. For, since that era, they became common to Jews and Christians, who would have detected in either any attempt to corrupt the Scriptures. Besides, the dispersion of the Jews over the world would have rendered such a design impracticable. If to these considerations we add the agreement of all the ancient paraphrases and versions, and the writings of Josephus, with the Old Testament, as it is now extant, together with the quotations which are made from it in the New Testament, and in other writings in all ages to the present time,—we have sufficient evidence to assure us that the books of the Old Testament are now in our hands unadulterated.

6. There are upwards of eleven hundred manuscripts of the Old Testament extant, which, though not all entire, are all agreed. This fact is conclusive on the subject; for though the various readings, which have been discovered by learned men, amount to some thousands, yet these differences are of so little real moment, that they scarcely affect the meaning of any one important passage. But this great advantage has been derived from these learned researches,—they have proved the agreement of the copies of the ancient Scriptures, now extant, in their original language, with each other, and with our Bibles.

7. Secondly, We have evidence equally strong for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament. There are many manuscripts in existence, which were written some time between 400 and 800 years after the authors' autographs, which have been found in different parts of the world, and which have descended to us through separate independent channels from their common original. In the most inaccurate of all the manuscripts which have been discovered and collated, there is evidently no great departure from the words of the original, and in all essential points there is an entire agreement with the text at present received. The various readings found by Griesbach and others, in collating the manuscripts of the New Testament, do not in the slightest degree affect, or render obscure or doubtful, any fact, or doctrine, or duty, as presented in our authorized version. Of the actual state of the case, in this respect, the reader may be better able to form an opinion, when he is assured, that could he compare the various manuscripts, he would be no more sensible of the

difference between them, than he is of the difference between the several copies of the English Bible. The uniformity of the manuscripts is indeed remarkable, and shows the veneration in which the Scriptures have been held : and the various readings, in place of furnishing an argument against the integrity of the books of the New Testament, afford an additional and convincing proof of their uncorrupted preservation. Unless a standing miracle had been wrought, the mistakes that have been made in transcribing the sacred books are only such as might have been expected, and seem to be inseparable from the means employed for transmitting to future ages the Holy Scriptures.

8. But the uncorrupt preservation of the text of the New Testament is farther proved from its agreement with the quotations in the works of the Christian Fathers, and with the ancient translations which are now extant. It is sufficient to remark on this part of the subject, that the quotations from the New Testament in the writings of the Fathers are so numerous, that the whole of the sacred text might be compiled from them.

9. With regard to translations, I shall only mention the old Syriac version, which was made, if not in the first century, certainly in the second. It has been transmitted by a channel perfectly independent of, and unknown to, that by which our Greek Testament was received ; nor was it known in Europe till the sixteenth century ; and yet, when the two were compared, the one was almost an exact version of the other. The fact therefore is indubitable, that “ we have this moment, in our hands, after the lapse of many ages, an intelligible record composed by the apostles or first disciples of Jesus Christ.”

10. But though the integrity of the books *now* contained in the Scriptures be established, it is asked, Are all the books which were written by inspiration preserved ? This question is curious rather than useful. On what ground do we suppose that any inspired writing has been lost ? Is it the apparent admission of this in certain expressions in the Old and New Testament ? “ In the histories of the kings of Judah and Israel, several things are mentioned, which are not there explained, and are referred to as contained in other books which the prophets wrote ; and sometimes the names of these prophets are mentioned ; and yet these writings are not extant in the canon which the Church of God receives. The reason of which,” says Augustine, “ I can account for no other way, than by supposing that those very persons to whom the Holy



Spirit revealed those things which are of the highest authority in religion, sometimes wrote only as faithful historians, and at other times as prophets under the influence of divine inspiration; and that these writings are so different from each other, that the one sort are to be imputed to themselves as the authors, the other to God, as speaking by them; the former are of service to increase our knowledge, the other of authority in religion, and canonical."\* In regard to this subject generally, I remark,—

11. 1st, That the citation of a book in a canonical writing is no evidence that the book referred to was written by inspiration, and canonical. For we find that the apostle Paul quotes passages from Aratus, Menander, and Epimenides. 2d, The greater number of pieces supposed to be lost are still remaining in the Scriptures, though under different names. 3d, We have no evidence whatever for supposing that the books alluded to which are not to be found there, were written by inspiration, or were designed for the religious instruction of mankind. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe, that every book that ever was written by inspiration, or that ever was received as the Oracles of God, has been preserved, and is now a part of the volume of Divine Revelation. We have good reason to entertain this opinion, not only on the ground already assigned, but, 4th, Because of the very high estimation in which the canonical writings were always held by Jews and Christians. They were willing to sacrifice everything, even life itself, rather than part with them, or suffer them to be injured or destroyed.

12. I conclude this dissertation on the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures by observing, that the books of the New Testament, with the exception of the writings of the apostle John, were all in circulation twenty or thirty years before the end of the first century, or the death of the apostle John. It is supposed that the Gospel of Matthew was written first, and in Hebrew. As it is evident, however, that neither Mark nor Luke had seen it, it is not likely that it was published long before they wrote the Gospels that bear their name. Clement, the apostolic father, whom Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians calls his "fellow-labourer, whose name is in the book of life," is the author of the only Christian writing, connected with the first century, except the Epistle to Diognetus,

\* De Civitate Dei, lib. xviii. c. 38.

and the Scriptures.\* He presided over the church at Rome, and long survived the apostles Peter and Paul. The epistle of which he was the author was written in the name of the church of which he was pastor, and addressed to the church of Corinth, where the original copy was probably long preserved: it was publicly read in the churches, according to the testimony of Eusebius. The fact that this epistle, notwithstanding the profound veneration of the whole Christian community for its author, was not admitted into the canon of Scripture, though it was occasionally read in the churches, shows the extraordinary care which was taken to admit only such writings as were unquestionably given by inspiration of God.

13. This epistle, though of a practical nature, and not designed to give a regular exposition of doctrine, contains all the great and fundamental principles of Christianity. The allusions contained in it to the books of the New Testament prove that they were then in general circulation, and that they were regarded by all Christians as much a part of inspired Scripture as the books of the Old Testament. In consequence of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistles of James and Jude, and the Second Epistle of Peter, not having been so widely circulated as the other writings of the apostles, they were not received in distant churches till due inquiry was made as to their respective authors, and their canonical authority. At length, however, they were received in every church, and their genuineness being proved, was universally admitted. The same remark is applicable to the book of Revelation, which was written at a late period of the life of the apostle John, and the canonical authority of which, therefore, was ascertained at a later period than the other books of the New Testament.

\* This truly apostolic epistle, by an unknown author, was preserved in the Works of Justin Martyr. Ed. Paris, 1636, p. 500.

## BOOK III.

### CONSIDERATIONS PRELIMINARY TO A REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCES OF DIVINE REVELATION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### ON THE USE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

1. As the reason or understanding of man must judge of the evidences offered in support of divine revelation, and determine as to their sufficiency to authenticate such revelation, it is proper that we should consider what is the legitimate use of reason in religion.

That it is the duty of man to exercise this characteristic faculty of his nature in distinguishing truth from error, in judging what is right, in examining the evidences of revelation, and in interpreting its meaning, is unquestionable. The appeal made by revelation is to the reason of man, not only in regard to the proofs of its divine authority, but to the nature of its contents. The circumstance of its containing some things hard to be understood, forms no valid objection to its credibility, inasmuch as such things are to be found in every department of the works of God. The case, however, would be different, if a book claiming to be a revelation from God contained doctrines altogether repugnant to, and irreconcilable with, right reason: we could not admit the validity of its claims; on the contrary, it would be our duty to reject them as without foundation.

2. There may, indeed, be danger of our acting presumptuously in the exercise of this faculty,—of our abusing instead of legitimately using it. There is no inconsiderable risk of resting in erroneous conclusions in religion,—in arresting further inquiry by the hasty inference, that because superstition and hypocrisy have abounded in the world, true religion has no existence,—that all pretensions to it have originated with priests and impostors, who, for sordid purposes, have always operated on the weaknesses of human nature. It is not uncommon for men who profess to take reason for their guide, and who admit the importance of religion, to be the slaves of

their own evil passions, in fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Can such persons be supposed capable of examining with impartiality the evidences of a religion which condemns them, and declares that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Is it probable that they will calmly listen to the voice of reason and of conscience, when it points out the duty of ascertaining whether the book which claims to be from God is really a communication of the mind and will of the Creator?

3. Nor are they more likely to use aright in religion the noble faculty of reason, who are cold and speculative sceptics, —who, from vanity and the love of distinction, broach and advocate opinions which are opposed to doctrines commonly received. What avails their glorying in the strength of their reason, and in their superior illumination? Esteeming themselves wise, have they not become fools? And what shall we say of those who, while they profess to receive the Bible as a revelation from God, bring its doctrines to the test of human opinion, and reject its great and characteristic truths, because they do not accord with this standard? Is not this procedure in a high degree irrational? Reason does not teach me to renounce the principles of natural religion because they involve results which surpass the comprehension of my understanding; neither does it authorize me to reject any part of a revelation, which, upon mature examination, I am convinced is from God, because it contradicts preconceived opinions, and opposes my inclination. On the contrary, its resting on the testimony of God is a sufficient proof of its accordancy with the highest reason, and furnishes the ground on which I am bound to receive it.

4. Men are called upon to believe this testimony on the ground of the evidence addressed to their reason, which proves it to be the testimony of God. If they believed only what they comprehended, their belief would not be so much an act of faith, rendering homage to the authority of the testifier, as an act of confidence in their own powers of comprehension.\* That which is incomprehensible to their faculties is as conformable to reason as that which they fully understand; but in the one case it surpasses their powers, in the other it is level with them. If they are assured that God is the speaker, there is no renunciation of reason in receiving, on his authority, that

\* Fletcher's Discourses on the Mysteries of Revelation.



which they do not fully comprehend; on the contrary, the circumstance that God is the revealer and the testifier is the highest reason for the implicit reception of his communication. Hence the false and pernicious character of the favourite affirmation of Bolingbroke, Voltaire, and Hume, "that our holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason, and that it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to a test which it is by no means fitted to endure."

5. False religion, no less than false philosophy, requires an imbecility or perversion of understanding; it reaps its triumphs, not from the progress of reason, but from the moral and intellectual degradation of the race; and, in place of raising man higher in the scale of being, by giving scope and elevation to the better powers and principles of his nature, its influence is exerted in darkening the lights of the human understanding. The communication of his counsel and will, which the Almighty has given to mankind, cannot demand the disuse of any of the faculties of the mind, and far less of that which characterizes it as a thinking and intelligent principle. It does inculcate diffidence in ourselves when engaged in examining the counsels and operations of the High and Lofty One; it reminds us of the immeasurable distance which separates the offspring of yesterday from Him whose habitation is eternity; and while it calls us to the performance of a reasonable service, it presses on our attention the danger of trusting to our own wisdom, or of leaning to our own understanding; but so far is it from claiming an implicit acquiescence in its authority, previous to the most rigorous investigation of the evidence on which that authority rests, that it expressly assures us that the Creator is only to be worshipped in spirit and in truth,—that His oracles are to be searched with humility and perseverance,—that it is our duty to judge, according to the evidence submitted to us, "what is right;" and that we may ascertain the truth of its doctrines by weighing their moral tendencies. While man is thus required to exercise his understanding in religion, are we not authorized to say, that he has never offered a greater insult to his nature, and in that nature to the God that made him, than when he began to depreciate and neglect the powers of his reason, and to consider their use in the service of his Creator as unnecessary or forbidden?

6. It has long been the endeavour of infidels to strengthen the prejudice against which I am now contending; to give to

Christianity all the scorn of a kindred alliance with the narrow and degrading superstitions that have covered the face of the earth, and to represent it as placed beyond the limits of that field from which may be gathered the fruits of wisdom and knowledge. It is owing to this prejudice that we sometimes witness the same individual giving the most convincing proofs of the superiority of his understanding in science, and of its imbecility in religion; advancing in the one by the vigorous exercise of his faculties to the discovery of its most hidden truths, and remaining, in relation to the other, ignorant of the elements of that book which claims to be a revelation from God. Let us not yield to the influence of a notion so false and delusive, nor think that we are to abandon the exercise of reason when we examine the authenticated record of the ways and the workings of the Almighty. Our service can be acceptable to a Being of infinite intelligence only when it proceeds from the convictions of our understandings as well as from the grateful feelings of our hearts.

7. The exercise of reason, then, is essentially required, in the first place, to judge of the evidence offered in attestation of divine revelation; secondly, to interpret its meaning; thirdly, to classify its contents; fourthly, to trace the connexion between what is mysterious and incomprehensible, and what is already clearly understood and believed.

In examining the internal evidences in particular, the exercise of reason is essentially required. Without this there would be lost one of the most striking evidences of the truth of Christianity,—its exquisite conformity, as brought out in the writings of men who were not philosophers, in a country where little of that philosophy was known, to all that the most profound metaphysical research has been able to discover of the phenomena of the human mind.\*

8. The conclusion of these observations on the office of reason in religion may be thus summed up:—The office of reason is to judge of the evidence of the record professing to be a revelation from God. When we are satisfied of the divine authority of Scripture, our understanding is to be humbly employed, and with dependence upon God, in ascertaining its sense: and whatever doctrine is there stated, or necessarily implied by the harmony of its different parts, is to be admitted, believed, and held fast, whether it corroborate or contradict the notions

\* Cook's Inquiry, &c. p. 42.

which our previous or collateral reasonings have led us to adopt. It is, indeed, more flattering to the human mind to be accounted a judge than to be reduced to the rank of a scholar; to be placed in a condition to summon divine wisdom to its bar, and oblige it to give an account of the reasons of its decisions, than to receive them upon authority; but this is the safe because the humble path. It is to the patient, prayerful study of divine truth, by its own light, that its harmonies, and connexions, and beauties, most freely reveal themselves, as the bud discloses to the solar light the graces it refuses to the hand of violence.\*

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## CHAPTER II.

ON THE LAWS OF NATURE, AND OUR BELIEF IN THEIR CONTINUANCE.

1. It is the intervention of human agents in the delivery of a divine revelation which renders it necessary to examine the nature of the evidence by which its heavenly origin is attested. Their mere affirmation concerning the divine nature of their communications cannot be received unless accompanied by indubitable proofs of their being commissioned by God to show unto men the way of salvation. These proofs may be both in the message which they deliver, and in the credentials which they furnish of their commission. In the former, we have the internal evidence for the truth of divine revelation; in the latter, the miraculous works by which its authority is attested. These two classes of evidences strengthen each other, and it is preposterous to disparage the one with the view of exalting the other.

2. As a miracle is a sensible deviation from the known laws of nature, and as a suspension of these laws is not to be expected but for some very important purpose which could not otherwise be accomplished, many seem to feel a difficulty in admitting that these laws have ever, on any occasion, been suspended. It has been affirmed, "that the probability of the continuance of the laws of nature is superior to every other evidence, and to that of historical facts the best established." This assertion has no other authority on which to rest than the reputation of him that made it.† But before we decide upon this point, we must ascertain the precise meaning of some of the terms involved in the inquiry.

\* Watson on the Use of Reason, &c.

† La Place.

3. In the proper sense of the word, a law is a rule given to an agent, according to which he is to act, which implies a power of yielding obedience. There can be no objection, however, to the use of the term, as applied to the order of nature, whether in matter or in mind, provided we remember, that in such acceptation its meaning can only be that uniform mode of acting by which it pleases the Deity to govern the world. The laws of nature, then, signify that mode of acting which the Deity has prescribed to himself in governing the world; or that course of things which he has established and continues to preserve. Laws of nature are the fixed principles or rules by which the creation, as known to us, is regulated.

4. To those who deny that these laws have been fixed by an almighty and intelligent Being, the Creator and moral Governor of the universe, we do not address ourselves. To reason with them concerning the temporary suspension, for important purposes, of these laws, which have, in their opinion, existed from eternity, independent of an intelligent Being, would indeed be preposterous. But to those who admit that this world is the workmanship of the only wise God,—that the laws by which all its movements are directed, and by which its phenomena, corporeal and mental, are produced, were established by him, it seems no difficult matter to demonstrate that his power can suspend or alter what he himself has fixed. And if it be admitted that God could do this, will it not be granted, that in regard to inanimate matter he might do it without injury to any sentient creature?

5. The contrary, however, has been affirmed. It has been said that if a man not versed in astronomy were told from some authority that he is accustomed to respect, that on a certain day it had been observed in London that the moon did not set, but was visible above the horizon for twenty-four hours, there is little doubt, that after making some difficulty about it, he would come at last to be convinced of the truth of the assertion. In this he could not be accused of any extraordinary or irrational credulity. The experience he had of the uniform setting and rising of the moon was but very limited; and the fact alleged might not appear to him more extraordinary than many of the irregularities to which that luminary is subject. Let the same thing be told to an astronomer, in whose mind the rising and setting of the moon were necessarily connected with a vast number of other appearances; who knew, for example, that the



supposed fact could not have happened unless the moon had exceedingly deviated from that orbit in which it has always moved, or the position of the earth's axis had been suddenly changed, or that the atmospherical refraction had been increased to an extent that was never known. Any of all these events must have affected such a vast number of others, that as no such thing was ever before perceived, an incredible body of evidence is brought to ascertain the continuance of the moon in her regular course. Against the uniformity, therefore, of such laws, it is impossible for testimony to prevail.

6. In the first place, the extraordinary phenomenon alluded to in this quotation, supposing it had occurred, would have taken place for no purpose, and for that reason is excluded from comparison with the miracles that have attested divine revelation. In the second place, the writer supposes that a suspension of the laws of nature cannot take place without producing injury,—a supposition which may be in accordance with fatalism, but which is inadmissible by those who believe that nature and its laws are the constitutions of a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, and who therefore can prevent any derangement arising from the temporary suspension of the established order of things. And thirdly, he affirms, as Hume did before him, that against the uniformity or continuance of the laws of nature, it is impossible for testimony to prevail.

7. In regard to the continuance of the course of nature, a few remarks are necessary.

The great character, as Dr. Brown remarks, of those changes in the midst of which we live, is the regularity which they exhibit,—a regularity that enables us to accommodate our plans with perfect foresight to circumstances which may not yet have begun to exist. We observe the varying phenomena as they are continually taking place around us and within us, and the observation may seem to be, and truly is, of a single moment; but the knowledge which it gives us is far more extensive. It is, virtually, information of the past and of the future, as well as of the present. The change which we know in the actual circumstances observed, we believe to have taken place as often as the circumstances before were similar; and we believe also, that it will continue to take place as often as future circumstances shall in this respect have an exact resemblance to the present. What we thus believe is always

verified by subsequent observation. The future, when it arrives, we find to be only the past under another form ; or, if it seem to present to us new phenomena, we do not consider these as resulting from any altered tendencies of succession in the substances which thus appear to be varied, but only from the new circumstances in which the substances themselves have been brought together,—circumstances in which, if they had existed before, we have no doubt that they would have exhibited phenomena precisely the same.\*

8. It is a fact, then, universally admitted, that our belief in the constancy of nature is an original principle of our constitution, and is as strong at the earliest dawn of existence as at any subsequent period. Experience, however varied and extended, does not add to the strength of this inherent principle. If, at any time, a doubt exists, the doubt relates not to the regularity and uniformity of nature,—not to the fact, that the same antecedents will be followed by the same consequents, but to the question, what the antecedents actually are in any given case? The object of experiments is to ascertain this. But the primary belief in the established relation between similar antecedents and consequents is firm and unwavering in all circumstances.

9. The harmony between this instinctive belief and the actual constancy of the course of things around us is complete. Nature does not deceive us. We believe as firmly that the sun will rise to-morrow as that it rose to-day or yesterday, and our anticipations are always verified. This belief in the continuance of nature is productive of the happiest results. In the first place we are forewarned thereby how to accommodate ourselves to the order established in the physical world. In the second place, it has a powerful influence on our moral deportment, and on all our relations public and domestic. In the third place, this principle bears on our future well-being by teaching us that we are hereafter to reap according to what we now sow. But while, for beneficent purposes, the belief in the uniformity of nature is firmly impressed on the human mind,—and the actual uniformity in the constitution of things accords with this belief,—there is nothing unreasonable or improbable in the supposition, that the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world may, for suitable ends, temporarily suspend its laws, or that such deviation from the established course may be sufficiently attested by the testimony of credible witnesses.

\* Brown on Cause and Effect, pp. 11, 12.

## CHAPTER III.

MIRACLES—THEIR NAMES IN SCRIPTURE—WHAT IS A MIRACLE?—DR. THOMAS BROWN'S VIEWS—TRENCH, BEARD, AND VAUGHAN'S VIEWS.

1. THOSE works of God, which are above and beyond nature, are in Scripture termed wonders, signs, powers, and sometimes simply works. The term "wonder" is taken from the effect of astonishment which the work produces on the beholder, and is transferred to the work itself. Mark ii. 12; iv. 41; vi. 51; viii. 37; Acts iii. 10, 11. The term "sign" denotes a token and indication of the near presence and working of God. Miracles, as signs, are demonstrations of the divine commission of the person who works them. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." 2 Cor. xii. 12. The term "powers," as applied to miracles, is derived from the cause, and ascribed to the effect. Acts ii. 22; 2 Cor. xii. 12; 2 Thess. ii. 9. Miracles are sometimes called "works." Matt. xi. 2. They are the wonderful works of Him whose prerogative it is, that "he doeth wondrous works."

2. No doubt the works which we behold in the ordinary course of nature are wonderful; the growing of the grass, the springing of the seed, the rising of the sun, are most wonderful. But when God, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, works above and beyond the known laws of nature, the effect is miraculous. We may admit that the seed that multiplies in the furrow is as marvellous as the bread that multiplied in Christ's hands; that the miracle, in one view, is not a greater manifestation of God's power than the ordinary and often repeated processes of nature. In these "the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Rom. i. 20. In these God speaks at all times and to all men. But in the miracle, which is a deviation from his ordinary mode of acting and of speaking, God is addressing a special message to mankind.

3. It has been said, that though the miracle is above and beyond nature, it is not against nature,—it is not a violation of a natural law.\*

4. The first writer who introduced this mode of speaking

\* Trench on Miracles, p. 14. Voices of the Church. Vaughan's Age and Christianity, p. 91.

about miracles was Dr. Thomas Brown, in a note in his second edition of his work on Cause and Effect. That distinguished man was not entirely satisfied himself that what he conceived to be a new view of miracles, as suggested in that note, had the merit of originality. My own opinion, which was the same then as it is now, I communicated freely to my able and acute friend. The leading passage in the note referred to is as follows :—"It is not in any miscalculation of the force of general testimony, whether original or derived, that the error of Mr. Hume's abstract argument consists. It lies far deeper; in the false definition of a miracle, which he has given, as a 'violation of the laws of nature.' The laws of nature surely are not violated when a new antecedent is followed by a new consequent; they are violated only when, the antecedent being exactly the same, a different consequent is the result. When we have once brought our mind to believe in the violation of the laws of nature, we cannot know what we should either believe or disbelieve as to the succession of events; since we must, in that case, have abandoned for the time the only principle on which the relation of cause and effect is founded. With Mr. Hume's view of the nature of a miracle—if we rashly give our assent to his definition—it seems to me not very easy to get the better of his sceptical argument. A miracle is not a violation of any law of nature. It involves, therefore, primarily, no contradiction nor physical absurdity. It has nothing in it which is inconsistent with our belief of the most undeviating uniformity of nature; for it is not the sequence of a different event when the preceding circumstances have been the same; it is an effect that is new to our observation, because it is the result of new and peculiar circumstances. The antecedent has been different, and it is not wonderful that the consequent also should be different. While every miracle may be considered as the result of an extraordinary antecedent, it may be regarded as out of the common course of nature, but not as contrary to that course.

5. "The assertor of a miracle,—according to the view which I have taken of it, and which seems to me impossible not to take of it,—is not the assertor of a violation of a law of nature. What he asserts is the operation of a Power that must be allowed to have existed truly at the moment of the alleged miraculous event, whether we admit or do not admit that particular operation,—the greatest of all existing powers,



since it is by it alone that every other power of nature is what it is,—and of which, what we term the laws of nature, are nothing more than the continued manifestation.

6. “If the existence of the Deity be admitted, and with his existence the possibility of his agency, then is the evidence of his asserted agency to be regarded in the same manner as the evidence of any other extraordinary event that is supposed to have resulted from any other new combination of physical circumstances. It is to be met, not with a positive denial, nor with a refusal to examine it, but with a cautious slowness of dissent proportioned to the extraordinariness of the marvellous phenomenon. He who was able to form the universe as it is, and to give life to man and everything which lives, may be presumed, if such be his pleasure, to be capable of giving life to a body that lies before us in death, inert and insensible indeed at present, but not more inert and insensible than the mass which was first animated with a living soul. God exists; his power is ever present with us; and it is capable of performing all which we term miraculous.

7. “It is indeed essential for our belief of any miraculous event, that there should be the appearance of some gracious purpose which the miracle may be supposed to fulfil, since all which we know of the operation of the Divine Power in the universe, indicates some previous purpose of that kind. The same principle which leads us to expect the light of another day from the rising of the morrow’s sun above the horizon, or, in a case more analogous, because more extraordinary, the fall of a stone from the sky, if the circumstances should recur which are necessary for the production of that rare meteor, would justify our expectation of the still rarer phenomena, which are termed miracles, if we had reason to believe at any time, that circumstances had occurred, in which the happiness that was in the view of the Divine Mind in the original miracle of creation, would be promoted by a renewal of his mighty agency.—If it be admitted that a Power exists who wrought the great miracle of creation with a gracious view to the happiness of man,—that a revelation, of which the manifest tendency was to increase the happiness of man, was necessary,—and that, if a revelation were deigned to man, a miracle, or a series of miracles, might be regarded as a very probable sanction of it; then the evidence of miracles is to be examined precisely like the evidence of any other extraordinary event. There is no violation of a law of

nature, but there is a new consequent of a new antecedent. There is not a phenomenon, however familiar now, which had not at one time a beginning. Everything has once been miraculous, if miraculous mean only that which results from the direct operation of a Divine Power; and the most strenuous rejecter of all miracles, therefore, if we trace him to his origin, through the successive generations of mankind, is an exhibitor, in his own person, of indubitable evidence of a miracle!"

8. This is clear and ingenious, but not original. Apart from the phraseology, is there anything substantially different from the views that have always been held respecting miracles? Dr. Brown maintains that there is no violation of the laws of nature, in the case of a miracle, because the new and extraordinary sequence is the result of a new and extraordinary antecedent. Let the writer be mentioned who on this subject ever held a different doctrine. I know not any. Have not all held,—do not all hold, that the antecedent to the extraordinary work, called a miracle, is God,—the power, or the will of God?

9. He admits that a miracle is "out of the common course of nature," but "not contrary to that course." "That a quantity of gunpowder," says he, "apparently as inert as the dust on which we tread, should suddenly turn into a force of the most destructive kind, all the previous circumstances continuing exactly the same, would be indeed contrary to the course of nature; but it would not be contrary to it, if the change were preceded by the application of a spark. It would not be more so (more contrary to the course of nature) if the antecedent were any other existing power, of equal efficacy; and the physical influence which we ascribe to a single spark, it would surely not be too much to claim for that Being, to whom we have been led, by the most convincing evidence, to refer the very existence of the explosive mass itself, and of all the surrounding bodies on which it operates, and who has not a less powerful empire over nature now, than he had at the very moment at which it arose, and was what he willed it to be. To that Almighty Power the kindling of a mass of gunpowder, to which our humble skill is adequate, is not more easy than any of the wonders which we term miraculous. Whatever he wills to exist flows naturally from that will. Events of this kind, therefore, if truly taking place, would be only the operation of one of the acknowledged Powers of Nature, producing, indeed, what no other power might be capable of

producing, but what would deserve as much to be considered as the natural consequence of the power from which it flows, as any other phenomenon to be regarded as the natural consequence of its particular antecedent."

10. A miracle, then, according to this distinguished philosopher, is to be regarded as out of the common course of nature, but not contrary to nature. And why? Because as every ordinary antecedent has its ordinary effect, so, an extraordinary antecedent—the power of God—is followed by an extraordinary result. But surely that which is out of the common course of nature, and which is above and beyond nature, may be said to be contrary to the course of nature. It is not natural for a person born blind to see. Is there any impropriety in saying, that the miraculous bestowment of sight upon such a person is contrary to the common course of nature? It is not natural for a person who has been a cripple from his mother's womb, to be able to walk. Is there impropriety in saying, that the miraculous bestowment of power to walk, as it can only come from a Power that is above nature, is contrary to the common course of nature?

11. The phraseology is objectionable which describes the power of God as one of the acknowledged Powers of Nature. God, from whom all nature has received its existence, is not to be classed with what are termed the Powers of Nature. He "who is over all, God blessed for ever," is above nature, giving it form, and order, and beauty. I am well aware that Dr. Brown meant nothing erroneous by the use of this language: but it is in itself objectionable, and ought to be avoided.

12. If on the ground, that in the case of miracles there is an adequate cause for the extraordinary effect—an extraordinary antecedent preceding the miraculous result,—if on this ground it is maintained, that there is no violation of the laws of nature, I am ready to acquiesce in the doctrine. But while I acquiesce in this opinion, I am far from thinking that the doctrine is any new discovery. Men may have used incautious language in regard to this subject; but what respectable writer on miracles has held a contrary tenet? What Christian author has ever held that a miracle is a physical contradiction,—such a contradiction, or violation, as would take place, when the antecedent being exactly the same, a different consequent is the result?

13. Nor will it now be denied by any one that Dr. Campbell has unnecessarily expatiated on the origin of our belief in testimony

as a principle of our constitution. Dr. Brown has stated the matter most truly in saying that "the great mistake of that argument (Mr. Hume's) does not consist, as has been imagined, in a miscalculation of the force of testimony in general: for the principle of the calculation must be conceded to him, that, whatever be the source of our early faith in testimony, the rational credit, which we afterwards give to it, in any case, depends on our belief of the less improbability of the facts reported, than of the ignorance or fraud of the reporter. If the probabilities were reversed, and if it appeared to us less probable, that any fact should have happened as stated, than that the reporter of it should have been unacquainted with the real circumstances, or desirous of deceiving us, it matters little from what principle our faith in testimony may primarily have flowed: for there is surely no one who will contend, that, in such a case, we should be led by any principle of our nature to credit that which appeared to us, at the very time at which we gave it our assent, unworthy of being credited, or, in other words, less likely to be true than to be false."

14. In regard to the statements of Trench, Beard, and Vaughan, respecting miracles, I have to observe,—

15. First, that while the terms, "violation of the laws of nature," ought to be avoided, I cannot see how in this case what is admitted to be above and beyond nature, is not really contrary to the course of nature, and a suspension of the laws of nature. It is a law of nature that a heavy body should fall to the ground; but if at the moment of my passing under a falling body, it is prevented from falling, is not the law suspended?

16. Secondly, Trench denies that a miracle is against nature or contrary to nature. "The miracle is not thus unnatural, nor can it be." Are we then to view the miracle as a natural occurrence? We are, according to this writer, because "the true miracle is a higher and purer nature, coming down out of the world of untroubled harmonies into this world of ours, which so many discords have jarred and disturbed. The healing of the sick can in no way be termed against nature, seeing that the sickness which was healed was against the true nature of men; that it is sickness which is abnormal, and not health. The healing is the restoration of the primitive order."

17. The reason assigned for the miracle being natural is extraordinary, as in reality it does away with the miraculous altogether. It is a bringing down of powers from a department



of nature that is above and beyond us, and not known to us, to this world, which is known to us. Our objection to the statement is, not merely that it is using the word nature in a double acceptation,—applying it to nature as known, and to nature as unknown;—but that the antecedent of the miracle is a power in nature;—as truly in nature as if it were one of the laws of the globe on which we dwell,—and therefore the miracle is only a miracle in regard to us, but no miracle in itself. It is produced by causes already at work in the kingdom of nature, and the doer of it is to be recognised as one who has a clearer, a deeper, and an earlier insight than others into her laws and the springs of her power. In what is this different from the doctrine of Schleiermacher concerning miracles?

18. Thirdly, I cannot believe that this is the opinion of Trench, and I know it was not the opinion of Dr. Thomas Brown, from whom later writers have, perhaps unconsciously, borrowed much of their phraseology upon this subject. According to Brown, it is the Deity willing an unusual effect, and the desired change ensues. The will of the Deity is the antecedent, the miracle is the sequence. A new power is introduced into nature, and from its operation new effects follow. A new antecedent coming into action, a new consequent necessarily ensues.

19. What is decidedly objectionable here is the classing of divine power among natural causes. It is wrong to place the Divine will among natural causes, because it was from the Divine will that nature proceeded, and on this Supreme Power it continually depends; a power therefore above and beyond nature. When this power interferes, “and produces an effect at variance with the ordinary operation of the laws of nature, such interference is not the operation of another natural law; it is that power which is above nature, showing itself to be a power over nature, and capable of counterworking any of those laws at the pleasure of its divine Possessor, when any divine end requires it.”\*

20. How the will of the Deity operates in producing the unusual effect is, of course, what so distinguished a philosopher as Brown never thought of explaining. This fault is chargeable on Trench and on Dr. Vaughan. The latter speaks of a new power coming in, capable of giving a *particular direction to*

\* Wardlaw on Miracles, p. 36.

*natural causes*, so that a particular event follows. Whether the Deity when he interposes to produce an unusual effect, that is, a miraculous work, operates by giving a particular direction to natural causes, is, of course, mere conjecture. It is no doubt an attempt to explain that which is inexplicable, to throw light on what will remain hidden from man, and to furnish an answer to the opponent of miracles from a province above and beyond the reach of the human faculties. All such attempts are worse than unphilosophical and useless, for in place of making the subject more clear, they invest it with mysticism. Why should it be deemed necessary, in alluding to His mighty works who speaks and it is done, to say, that in producing a miraculous work, he gives a particular direction to natural causes, and that a miracle may be no more than the putting of one set of these causes into action in place of another? Why suppose any vinculum between the will of God, and the effect which, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, he desires to produce? He who at the beginning said, "Let there be light, and there was light," has only to will the existence of a world, and a world starts into being :

All power is his, and whatsoe'er he wills,  
The will itself omnipotent fulfils.

21. A miracle is a work of God, contrary to, above and beyond, the known ordinary laws of nature,—a work in which there may be a suspension of these laws,—an operation above these laws. No, says Spinosæ; the miracle is making God to contradict himself, for the law which was violated by the miracle is as much God's law, as the miracle which violated it. The miracle, says Trench, is not a discord in nature, but the coming in of an higher harmony; not disorder, but instead of the order of earth, the order of heaven; not the violation of law, but that which continually, even in this natural world, is taking place, the comprehension of a lower law by a higher; in this case the comprehension of a lower natural, by an higher spiritual law.

22. The answer to this not very clear statement is simple and obvious. In so far as it is intelligible, it is a confirmation of the opinion of Spinosæ, that a miracle, considered as a counteraction or suspension of a physical law, is a discord, a contradiction. Did the writer forget, that the term law when applied to the course of nature is used in a secondary or

metaphorical sense? Did he overlook the very obvious fact, that Almighty Power may, at any time, modify or change the order of the physical world, without breaking in upon the harmony of the universe? To change or annihilate moral law, and equity, and moral order, is a very different thing. Omnipotence itself cannot do this. A righteous judge will not overbear by power, justice and just judgment. In the physical world the case is totally different. Almighty Power may suspend, for wise and good reasons, the operation of a natural law, or the mode in which it usually works. If there be no moral hindrance, why, when the occasion requires it, should it not do so?

23. The statement of Trench would seem to confound moral with natural or physical law. To violate the former would indeed be "a discord, a disorder." Whoever supposed that in the working of a miracle any moral law was violated? We know that this is impossible. It is impossible, because God, most righteous and holy, never can do anything inconsistent with the perfection of his nature—never can do anything opposed to the moral rectitude of his government. For this reason, we hold that a miracle never has been wrought, and never will be wrought, but for an end worthy of the infinitely wise God.

24. The probability of miracles, when such ends present themselves, will be afterwards noticed. In the meantime, it may be observed, that it is essential to a clear understanding of this subject, that we keep in view the great difference between the moral and the material, between the corporeal and the spiritual, in the universe of God. Who would put the inert, mechanical creation in comparison with the rational, accountable, and immortal beings that God has made,—that he has made in his own image, and capable of making progress without limit in intellectual and moral improvement? Who would put this inert mass of matter,—harmoniously disposed by infinite wisdom as it is,—in comparison with the intellectual and spiritual well-being of one intelligent and immortal creature? If we cannot conceive this to be done by any one, why should any one object to God's rendering the physical creation subservient to the religious and moral improvement of man; or, in other words, to his suspending, or counter-working, natural laws, for the purpose of promoting the moral and eternal good of millions of intelligent beings? This is so

far from being a discord, that its design is to bring about harmony,—it is so far from being a disorder, that its end is to magnify and make honourable that law, whose seat is the bosom of God, and whose voice is the order of the universe.

25. How beautifully does the order of physical nature minister to the necessities of man ! By infinite wisdom and goodness, nature is so arranged and governed, that in all her vicissitudes and operations, she is the instructress and the friend of man. The brightness and the beauty with which it is adorned, serve to gratify his senses, and add to his happiness. The grass that grows, and the seed that multiplies, are intended for his use : and through this medium the bountiful Father of all opens his hand and supplies the wants of every living thing. This no doubt is done by an admirable regularity, by an unfailing succession : but the Creator and Preserver, for the good of man, may temporally interpose, and by working in a way that the ordinary natural laws cannot work, give convincing and most satisfying evidence, that it is He who speaks ;—that the message of mercy and lovingkindness is from himself ;—and that He addresses it with authority, but with tender compassion, to his sinful creatures. Is it not weakness, is it not childishness, to deny, that for a purpose so vast and glorious as their recovery to holiness and to happiness, he may do so, and that his doing so is highly probable ? In proportion to the probability that He whose tender mercies are over all his works will interpose for the salvation of man, is it probable, that he will interpose for its confirmation by the working of “ signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and the bestowment of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.”

26. The delusion has been practised, in some cases, perhaps wilfully, of confounding physical with moral laws,—the mere matter of the universe with the living, intelligent, accountable, and immortal beings who dwell in it. When we speak of a natural law, what can we mean, if we attach a meaning to the words which we use, but an invariable connexion between antecedents and sequences, the uniformity of which we call a law, but is merely a manifestation of the will of the Creator and Preserver of all, and which the divine will may change or annihilate ? When we speak of a moral law, we refer to that which has an immutable and eternal existence, and which Omnipotence cannot counterwork or destroy :—which Omnipotence can neither make nor unmake.



27. I confess that, to me, the mass of inert matter which constitutes the globe on which we dwell, notwithstanding its well-regulated order, its beauty and brightness, is so greatly inferior to the moral world—to man a moral agent, and immortal being, that it surprises me not that the beneficent Father of all should interpose, in an extraordinary manner, to operate upon it,—when miraculous operations are required for the moral, the spiritual, and the eternal well-being of man. It is childish weakness, it is marvellous ignorance, not to admit the very great probability that God would interpose, when his interposition was intended to magnify and honour the laws of the moral world ;—and that he would give demonstration of his interposition by arresting or new-directing that same order of PHYSICAL NATURE which he himself had fixed : or, by making manifest his extraordinary interposition, by the extraordinary results that follow.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ASSAULT ON MIRACLES—THE UNSOUNDNESS OF HUME'S ARGUMENT.

1. ACCORDING to Mr. Hume, testimony cannot prove the reality of a miracle, because, as he alleges, it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false ; and it will always be more wonderful, therefore, that the violation of the laws of nature should have taken place, than that any number of witnesses should have been deceived, or should have been disposed to deceive others. We have had experience of the invariable uniformity of the course of nature, but we have had no such experience of the invariable uniformity of the truth of testimony. On the contrary, we have found testimony to be often false. No testimony, therefore, is sufficient to prove a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would appear to be more miraculous than the events which it was designed to establish.

2. There have been many able refutations of this plausible, but sophistical argument ;—an argument which owes its celebrity to its plausibility, and nothing to its solidity ;—but the ablest has been by Principal Campbell. I admit that the first section, and a considerable part of the first half of his Essay, might have been spared. In this he shows that Hume's

argument is founded on a false hypothesis, namely, that the evidence of testimony is derived solely from experience. "That the evidence of testimony is derived solely from experience, which seems to be an axiom of this writer, is at least not so incontestable a truth as he supposes it : that, on the contrary, testimony hath a natural and original influence on belief, antecedent to experience, will, I imagine, easily be evinced. For this purpose, let it be remarked, that the earliest assent which is given to testimony by children, and which is previous to all experience, is in fact the most unlimited ; that by a gradual experience of mankind, it is gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds. To say, therefore, that our diffidence in testimony is the result of experience, is more philosophical, because more consonant to truth, than to say that our faith in testimony has this foundation. Accordingly, youth, which is inexperienced, is credulous : age, on the contrary, is distrustful. Exactly the reverse would be the case, were the author's doctrine just."

3. Now, what may justly be said of this is, that while it is true, it is not to the point. Whether the disposition to give credit to the testimony of others,—a disposition which children exhibit at the earliest dawn of reason, be an original principle of our nature, it was unnecessary for Dr. Campbell, in his refutation of this sophistical argument, to spend time and labour to prove. He fully admits, what indeed cannot be denied, that experience is the measure that regulates, and which ought to regulate, the degree of confidence which we repose in testimony :—it is the test by which to compute the amount of credit due to it in particular instances. Though there be inherent in the human mind a susceptibility to believe the testimony of our fellow-men, yet, if we have found that testimony has been false in given circumstances, and has deceived us, we become distrustful of such testimony, and altogether withhold our confidence.

4. But if our distrust or diffidence in testimony be the result of experience, so also is our confidence in testimony the effect of experience. The confidence of children is credulity,—it is therefore valueless in regard to the matter under consideration. How do we acquire an enlightened, discriminating confidence in testimony? How, but by experience,—by that discriminating between different descriptions of testimony which must be the result of experience? It was of no use

therefore in Principal Campbell to spend time in establishing a position which, though true, is beside the mark, and does not in the least aid him in advancing to his conclusion;—as was noticed in the preceding chapter.

5. He admits, and all must admit, that the diffidence in testimony which arises from experience, is, in the first instance, diffidence in testimony generally;—that gradually experience teaches us accurately to discriminate between different descriptions of testimony,—between what is worthy of all confidence and what is worthy of none. In this way, we are taught diffidence in testimony and confidence in testimony;—that is, we are taught by experience to discriminate between the different kinds of testimony,—between what we are to believe and what we are to disbelieve.

6. Hume's argument rests entirely on sophisms:—on his ambiguous and artful use of the words *experience* and *testimony*;—and also on his assuming as true, what we affirm is false, viz. that a miracle is a physical contradiction, a violation of the laws of nature.

7. In order clearly to perceive this, we may here repeat his argument. It may be thus stated:—"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature: and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined; for as there is no such uniform experience of the truth of human testimony, as there is of the uniformity of the laws of nature, the one experience must always be stronger than the other; and no testimony, therefore, can ever render a miracle probable. It is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false."

8. Who may not perceive that there is more than a double fallacy here? First, our experience of the uniformity of nature is put in opposition to testimony in general; and thus an attempt is made to balance things which are not homogeneous. My experience of nature's constancy is no contradiction of the testimony of men who affirm they were eye-witnesses of those extraordinary events termed miracles. This is not testimony against testimony,—the one attesting the contrary of the other; nor does it furnish any evidence of the incompetency and disreputable character of the witnesses—the proper means by which testimony in any particular instance

can be shown to be unworthy of credit. My belief in the constancy of nature, in place of being a hindrance to my receiving as true the testimony of credible witnesses, operates all in the contrary direction, inasmuch as it disposes me to put confidence in such testimony until its distrustful character, or falsehood, is established by opposing testimony.

9. Secondly, the fallacy of Hume's reasoning also lies in his using the word testimony in a collective or generic acceptance. It is quite true, that there is a kind of testimony which is deceptive and unworthy of confidence, and which experience has taught us to distrust: but there is another kind of testimony which has never deceived,—which claims our full reliance, and in which experience has taught us to confide. Experience has taught us to guard against being deceived by testimony which wants the known characteristics of truth. But we have also learned from experience that there is another kind of testimony which never deceives, and in the truth of which we may trust with the most perfect confidence. "Let me make the supposition, that the testimony in question affirmed the resurrection of one from the dead, who had been seen to expire by thousands of assembled witnesses. If it be objected, that the truth of such a fact would imply a phenomenon wholly unexampled in the history of the species,—if it be said, we have no experience of such an event turning out to be real, it may be said as truly, that we have no experience of such an averment turning out to be fallacious. The renovation of a lifeless corpse that had been laid in the tomb, but emerged from it again in the full possession of wonted activity and consciousness, is said to be a miracle; but equal, at least, would be the miracle of either a falsehood or an error in him, who, throughout the whole of a life devoted to the highest objects of philanthropy, made constant assertion of his having seen, and handled, and companied with the risen man, who maintained this testimony amid the terrors and the pains of martyrdom, and in the words of such an exclamation as 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' breathed it out as the last and the dying utterance of his faith." \*

10. Mr. Hume has confounded things which are very different, though called by the same name. Our confidence in the constancy of nature is not stronger than our confidence in the truth of a certain kind of testimony. If our experience

\* Chalmers's Evidences, &c.



has taught us that nature is uniform in its operations,—experience has also taught us that the testimony of honest and competent witnesses,—who adhere to their averments at the expense of their interests, and at the hazard of their lives,—whose testimony respects matters of fact cognizable by the senses, about which they could not be mistaken,—our experience has taught us that such testimony is invariably true, and to be relied upon.

11. The case is not altered by the circumstance that the facts concerning which the witnesses bear testimony are different from any that have come within our observation;—that they are in their nature miraculous. For it is to the nature of the evidence that we are called to attend,—not so much to the facts certified. Why should I disbelieve the reality of an event, merely because it is different from what has come within my observation? If the objections of Hume and La Place to the sufficiency of testimony to prove the reality of the gospel miracles were valid, what would become of the acquirements of science which are made by means of our confidence in testimony? The diffidence in testimony, which is the result of experience, is a diffidence not in testimony in general, but in the testimony of dishonest men. Experience has taught us that their testimony is to be received with suspicious caution. But it has also taught us to infer with confidence the reality of an event certified by testimony of a purer source;—because there has always been found a conjunction between this testimony and the fact or event which it narrates. Our reliance on the similarity of the future to the past is not greater than is our reliance on the constancy of the conjunction between this testimony and the fact or event certified. And thus it is, as Hume himself has observed, that nature will always maintain her rights, and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatever.

12. It was on this ground that Mr. Hume was led to acknowledge that there is a species of testimony which even he would regard as sufficient to authenticate a miracle. He admits that if the falsehood of the testimony were more miraculous than the event related, he would feel himself bound to receive it. We have no objection to place the question on this ground: and, consequently, according to Mr. Hume's maxim, we are bound to reject the supposition of falsehood in the testimony of the witnesses, and to believe that the miracles of Moses, of Christ, and of his Apostles, were really performed. This sceptic

is grossly inconsistent with himself;—as Principal Campbell has fully shown.

13. Thirdly, the argument of Hume rests on the ambiguity of the word *experience*. What is the experience of one individual person? Is it not confined to the extent of his bodily presence? How limited is the experience even of one generation! and as to the individuals of which it is made up, how little can each one know from personal experience! From this source he can know nothing of the past, or of the future, or of what is beyond the bounds of his observation. All else must be received on the sole authority of testimony. With no propriety, therefore, can it be said that his experience is against what is said to have taken place eighteen hundred years ago.

14. But Mr. Hume would probably say, that he did not use the word in this narrow acceptation, but meant by it, the experience of all mankind in all ages, and in all nations. Is not this, however, a begging of the question? To say that anything is contrary to experience in this sense, what is it but to say, that such a thing has not taken place? It is simply denying the fact that is alleged to have happened. It is nothing more than the sceptic's affirmation as to the impossibility of a miracle.

15. Besides, if it be only by testimony that we obtain knowledge of the experience of those who have lived before us,—to affirm that all experience is against miracles, is to affirm that all testimony is against them, which is manifestly false; for we have testimony for them, and none against them;—testimony founded on the experience of those who witnessed them,—such testimony as has never been deceptive or false. Its failure or its falsehood would be a contradiction to the moral, the rational, the material constitution of man. We have this testimony in all its fulness, founded on the personal experience of thousands, to the miraculous attestations of the Gospel,—and we have no conflicting, no opposing testimony. Testimony *such as this*, has never, in one instance, failed, and never can fail.

16. The miracles recorded in the Bible, in place of rendering the gospel history improbable, are required to give probability to that history. Let any one make the experiment,—let him lay aside the miracles, and he will find that those things in that history, of the truth and certainty of which he had no doubt,

lose the appearance of truth. But when he adds the miracles which Christ and his Apostles performed, the narrative assumes consistency, harmony is restored, and the whole commends itself to the conscience as from God.

17. Thus Mr. Hume's argument—far more celebrated than it had any title to—is founded in sophistry, and on the ambiguous use of words. When examined narrowly, it is found to be self-contradictory; and in handling it, it disappears. Even without such an examination, it might have justly been deemed fallacious, as all presumptive evidence was opposed to it. It would prove as subversive of natural as of revealed religion. Are not the extent, order, and adaptation of the works of God the foundation of our reasonings and conclusions regarding his power, wisdom, and goodness? What *experience* has mankind, with the exception of a few philosophers, of that magnificent creation which the telescope has disclosed, or of the wonders, not less astonishing, which the microscope has discovered, or of that admirable mechanism which exists in the animal frame? They have, however, no doubt of the reality of these things. Why have they no doubt? Because they have confidence in the testimony of competent witnesses. They reason on these things as undoubted facts,—as undoubted as if they had personally observed them; and they justly regard them as conclusive arguments for the being and perfections of God. But, according to the principle of Mr. Hume's objection to miracles, this is wrong; and we should receive none of these things as true, and make none of them the foundation of our reasoning, till they become the subject of our own experience,—till we shall have gone through a full course of astronomical observation, and chemical experiment, and physiological scrutiny, and seen everything with our own eyes. This absurdity requires no exposure.

18. To sum up what has been said, it appears that Hume's argument is based upon a fallacy—First, in putting testimony in general in opposition to our experience of the uniformity of nature's laws, and thus balancing things which are not homogeneous: Secondly, in using the word testimony in a collective or generic sense; and, Thirdly, in using the word experience in an ambiguous acceptance,—as referring either to our personal experience, or to the experience of all men in all ages and in all nations. In the former sense, it gives no aid to

Mr. Hume's argument: in the latter, it is simply a *petitio principii*. It is a *petitio principii* so obvious that we cannot believe it escaped the notice of the author.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GERMAN RATIONALISTIC ASSAULT ON MIRACLES.

1. THE Deism which prevailed among the upper classes in this country during the eighteenth century, assumed a new aspect when it was embraced in Germany,—an aspect suited to the idiosyncrasy of the German mind. In general, the Deists of Britain renounced revelation avowedly, and openly opposed it: in Germany it has been assailed chiefly by ecclesiastics,—by the professed teachers of theology. They have continued to be ministers of religion, and professors of divinity, while they have not ceased to put forth all their talent and learning for the subversion of Christianity.

2. Even in Germany this infidelity has appeared in different forms and under different phases. We shall endeavour to give a view of it as it has been advocated successively by three classes.

### SECTION I.

#### THAT MIRACLES ARE ONLY RELATIVELY MIRACULOUS.

3. This notion has been maintained by Schleiermacher, who was one of Hegel's most accomplished pupils, who himself occupied a chair of instruction at Berlin, and aimed at uniting the philosophy of Hegel with the shadow of Christianity. Hegel's philosophy is a system of pantheism,—a system which denies the existence of a personal God; or in other words, which divests God of personal qualities,—attributes of an intelligent being, who thinks and feels, and acts as a morally free individual. Pantheism is in reality atheism. It makes all things God;—nature is God, and God is nature;—all things are God, man himself included. And yet this is the philosophy,—if philosophy it can be called,—which has entered into the sanctuary of the church in Germany, which has clothed itself in the robes of the ministers of religion, has withered the spirit of the Christian faith, and has extinguished its light and heat. "Hegel," according to a German expositor of his philosophy, "has a God without holiness, a Christ without spontaneous love, a Holy Ghost without a sanctifying power, a Gospel



without faith, a fall without sin, a sinful nature without demerit, an atonement without the forgiveness of sins, a death without an oblation—grace without redemption, religious doctrines without revelation, this world without the next, an immortality without individual existence, a Christian religion without Christianity,—in a word, a religion without religion.”

4. It was from this philosophical school that Schleiermacher, and afterwards Strauss, made their attack on Christianity. It is with the opinions of the former we have to do at present. He taught that the miracles of Christianity were no miracles in themselves, but only so *relatively*, as regarded those for whom they were wrought; and are to be viewed as the works of one who had a deeper insight into the laws of nature than the men of his own age, and could wield a power, therefore, which was to them unknown. This, it is obvious, is a denial of miracles altogether. Indeed, it is more: for it is a serious charge against the doer of these works: it is attributing falsehood and imposture to him, inasmuch as he professed his wonders to have been wrought by supernatural power, when he knew they were done according to nature’s ordinary laws and operations.

5. That what are called *pious frauds* have often been committed,—that artifices of this nature may have been used by the Jesuit missionaries, may be admitted: but that the kingdom of falsehood was subverted, and the kingdom of truth and righteousness established, by lies, and lying wonders, is a notion which all who regard the fundamental laws of moral belief must reject with abhorrence.

## SECTION II.

### THE RATIONALISTIC ATTACK ON MIRACLES.

6. Whether the Rationalists derived their origin from the writings of Spinoza, as has been alleged, is of little consequence. It is certain that they adopted one of his maxims, namely, that “all that is related in the revealed books happened in conformity with the established laws of the universe,—and that miracles are an impossibility.” Why an impossibility? Because, according to the pantheistic system of Spinoza, there is no God to work them. Though all those who have been called Rationalists have not been pantheists, they have all been so far spoiled “through philosophy and vain deceit,” as to embrace the principle, that a miracle is not to

be admitted, that it is a prodigy which never existed. The means by which they have been led to embrace this principle are various, but, in general, they are resolvable into false philosophy. Even their forced method of interpretation may have sprung originally from this. Miracles, which it was alleged Christ never professed to work, nor the sacred historians to record, were explained away as natural occurrences. There was no avowed hostility to the word of God, because the persons engaged in the movement were professed theologians; while there was a strenuous endeavour by learning and talent, to erase from the Bible all evidence of its being a supernatural revelation. It (*rationalism*) made the attempt to allow the sacred Text to remain,—to receive the New Testament as historic,—but to discover no miracles in it.

7. According to this scheme we are to believe that Christ did not heal an impotent man at Bethesda, but only detected an impostor; that he did not change water into wine at Cana, but brought in a new supply of wine when that of the house was exhausted; that he did not multiply the loaves, but, distributing his own and his disciples' little store, set an example of liberality which was quickly followed by others who had like stores, and in this way there was sufficient for all. At the head of the scheme was Paulus, who published his commentary in 1800. This absurd and outrageous mode of interpretation could not hold its ground long. It was at variance with the principles of language, with common sense, and even common integrity. Even those who disregarded the Scriptures as an authoritative rule denounced this mode of twisting and perverting them. In short, the incongruity of denying the miracles recorded in the Gospels, and maintaining, at the same time, the historical character of the Gospels, was so palpable, that this mode of assailing Revelation gradually sank into disfavour, and is now despised.

### SECTION III.

#### THE MYTHIC OR STRAUSSIAN ASSAULT ON MIRACLES.

8. When the scheme of the Rationalists was giving way, and sinking in popular opinion, "science, falsely so called," suggested another mode of assailing divine revelation. The man who embodied this suggestion, and gave it form and effect, was David Frederick Strauss, who was born in 1808, at Ludwigsburg, in Wurtenburg, one of the smaller states of Germany.

At Berlin he placed himself under the tuition of Schleiermacher, the most accomplished of Hegel's pupils;—Hegel himself having been carried off by cholera just before Strauss's arrival in that city.

9. I have said that this attack upon Revelation has proceeded from "science falsely so called"—from the philosophy of Hegel, which is essentially pantheistic. Its assailant is a professed theologian, as the assailants of Christianity in Germany generally are; but the assault in this, as in almost every case, is from a philosophical school. Accordingly, Strauss affirms that he acquired freedom from religious suppositions (impressions) by philosophical studies,—and that in these studies he arrived at the conviction that a miracle is an impossibility. That conviction, and the whole course of his proceeding, naturally followed from the adoption of his pantheistic creed. In accordance with this creed he maintains, that "a miraculous operation upon natural objects, or products of art, as turning water into wine, multiplication of loaves, admits of no possible explanation. Even the conception of such a possibility is so far out of the question, that I must lose my senses before I could receive anything of the kind."

10. Would it not have been more straightforward in this man to have at once given up Christianity altogether? Believing as he does, that the Gospels are full of miracles which no art of interpretation can explain away, would he not have acted a part far more ingenuous to have retired *as an unbeliever*? It was as a pantheistic unbeliever he began his examination of the Gospels, concerned only to find grounds of impeachment against them, determined to assail their historical reality, and in this way to give their narratives of miraculous works the character of legendary tales. It was as a confirmed unbeliever he went to the Gospels, in order if possible to find out some way of accounting for their origin, without admitting their historical reality. It was not truth he sought: but how to make the variations in the narratives of the four Evangelists the basis of a theory for subverting Christianity; and exaggerating these variations into all manner of possible objections. In consistency with his avowed opinions before he began this investigation, he could not have done otherwise than either to renounce these atheistic opinions, or bring in a verdict against the authority of the Gospels. What weight can the testimony of such a man possess? To make up for the failure of his

precursors in their assaults on Christianity, he has had recourse to the wonder-working power of the myth. He has said, that miracles are an impossibility,—that, consequently, miracles are not, and never were. He has also maintained, that the explanation of the Rationalists or naturalists is untenable. He set himself therefore to find another theory,—a theory consistent with his philosophy. He fixed on the doctrine of myths.

11. He has certainly destroyed the scheme of the Rationalists—of explaining the gospel narratives by natural or ordinary causes. Nothing can be said by them in defence of their theory. Strauss has so far cleared the ground that the argument at present is between an historical Gospel, full of narratives of miraculous events, and the myths. He has shown that the writers of the Gospels intended to assert miracles,—that they themselves believed in the miracles the reality of which they affirmed;—and that those Gospels are miraculous in their whole texture. The question, then, simply is, Are we obliged to recognise a Divine Power as the cause, or will the mythic system solve the problem?

12. It was in 1835 that Strauss published his *Life of Jesus*,—a work which is not a biography, but a commentary on the four Gospels, arranged so as to suit the purpose of the author. This book, which amalgamated, as it were, the doctrines of materialism, spiritualism, and mysticism, was the consequence of premises laid during the preceding half-century. In the pantheistic school the author had acquired considerable skill in refining away historical personages. His boldest propositions had been previously advanced and debated: the work was seen to be the necessary result of preceding philosophies, and modes of Scripture interpretation. Strauss has had fore-runners in the most distinguished philosophers and theologians of Germany from the close of the last century. What was Kant's work on religion, which made the Scriptures a succession of moral allegories, but a preparation for Straussism? What was the half mystical half sceptical school of Schelling, but an advance in the same destructive path? What was Hegel's philosophy, but an elaborate inculcation of pantheism? And as to theologians, Semler, Eichhorn, and many others, were familiar with the mythic principle, and applied it in the interpretation of particular passages both of the Old and New Testaments, which in their obvious historical sense implied a supernatural interposition.



13. In what then does the peculiarity of Strauss consist? Merely in this,—in applying the principle which had been employed to do away with certain parts of revelation, to do away with the whole of it; and thus assailing the whole historical reality of the Gospels. If it be asked, What are we to understand by a myth? the usual signification is, a legend,—the idea of an age personified. A system of myths is a mythology—is that which has no real historical existence,—a system of fables, different from historical facts. This wild theory of Strauss bears considerable resemblance to that of Woolston, the English Deist, who lived about the beginning of the last century. He had endeavoured by means of allegory to do away with the miracles recorded in the Gospels;—by attempting to prove, that the literal sense of our Lord's miracles was denied by the early fathers of the Christian church:—and that taken in a *literal sense* the accounts of these miracles in the Gospels are too absurd to be received. They must be understood, therefore, allegorically; that is, as lessons of morality,—clothed in the form of historical events:—and consequently, there were no miracles.\*

14. Woolston thus perverted,—and no doubt knowingly,—the views of Origen and of his followers. This eminent Christian father held the historical reality of the divine records; but maintained that there is a spiritual meaning underneath: whereas Woolston contended for the reverse,—that it is impossible this history can be real, therefore its whole significance is moral and spiritual. Origen “built upon the establishment of the historic sense, Woolston on its ruins.”

15. Strauss assumed the character of a philosophical and critical assailant of miracles. As a philosophical assailant, he followed the atheistic Spinoza in maintaining that a miracle is impossible, “since the laws of nature are the only and the necessary laws of God.” In the mind of a pantheist, there is no God. To speak of the laws of God, therefore, is to use language that is fitted to deceive, and can have no definite meaning. As there is no God, there cannot be any miracles.

16. In order to strengthen this position, Strauss, assuming the character of a critic, proceeded to a critical examination of the gospel miracles. He proceeded to this critical examination, be it observed, not for the purpose of calmly inquiring, whether the Gospels are genuine, and the miracles real—for the impossi-

\* Letters on Miracles.

bility of either he had previously decided on his philosophical ground: his sole object was to make use of the apparent discrepancies between the Evangelists as arguments against the historical reality of the Gospels and the reality of the miracles of which they are the narratives. He endeavours to show from a comparison of the four Evangelists that they contradict one another and also the cotemporaneous Greek and Roman historians. He takes notice of the apparent discrepancies as if they had not been observed, and in the majority of cases satisfactorily accounted for, by Christian writers from Augustine till the present time. A solution had been previously suggested for very nearly all these variations. But it did not suit the purpose which this critic had in view to take notice of the numerous cases in which the groundlessness of objections had been shown; or of the cases in which the apparent variations arose from the ignorance of commentators of the phraseology and the customs of apostolic times; or of the cases in which the seeming differences of the Evangelists ought to be resolved into the imperfection of our knowledge. Though common justice required that the same amount of credit should be given to the sacred historians which is readily conceded to Josephus, and Philo, and Tacitus, it did not accord with the object of Strauss to do so; and therefore it has not been done. How, indeed, could this have suited the purpose of a man by whom all the miracles had been condemned beforehand? From the hostile position he had taken up before opening the Bible, it was nothing but difficulties he was in search of in the Gospels, and nothing but alleged contradictions would have answered his design. If there be no God to interpose, as all pantheists in effect affirm, there can be no miracle; and if there has been no miracle, how can the historical reality of books which contain accounts of supernatural events be admitted? A solution, however, must be given to the question, How did these narratives of miraculous events come into existence? and no solution, it appears, could be given, but the natural magic of myths.

17. But Strauss, as if conscious that this mythic solvent would prove unavailing of itself, falls back on the discrepancies between the four Evangelists; and exercises all his skill and learning to show that these are confirmatory of his mythic theory of the origin of the Gospels. As to the wild mythic theory, it has fallen already even in Germany. Its refutation is superfluous.

18. As to the assault on the historical reality of the Gospels founded upon the alleged variations between the Evangelists, I shall only make the following remarks :—

19. (I.) In every case of apparent difficulty where two interpretations seem to be admissible, the one in accordance, the other in seeming conflict, with other parts of the Evangelical history, Strauss invariably prefers the second. The first, in all fairness, ought to be preferred in all cases where you have no reason to believe that the writer was a deceiver or a dupe. We have the testimony of millions in favour of the genuineness and credibility of the histories written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and if from obvious causes a word or a passage admits of two meanings,—the one agreeing, the other disagreeing, with other parts of the record,—we are bound in common justice to take the first, and reject the second. This is no favour: it is only fair play. This law of sound criticism Strauss always violates. He does so, because his mind was under the commanding power of the first principle of his philosophy, that a miracle is inconceivable, and that therefore nothing is to be admitted, that might compel an acknowledgment of it. Luke ii. 1, 2.

20. (II.) He makes a difficulty where there is none, and turns it to his own account, in order to bring the sacred writers into discredit. As an example, we may point to his comment on a comparison of Matt. xxvii. 45; Mark xv. 33; Luke xxiii. 44.

21. (III.) He denies the reality of a miraculous event merely on the ground of its being certified only by one Evangelist. Thus the occurrence of the earthquake at the crucifixion is set aside, because Matthew is the only one of the Evangelists who speaks of it.

22. All the miracles are set aside as either parables, which were taken at a later period for real histories, or legends, or copies from those of the Old Testament. But the miracle of Christianity itself, in the mighty change it has produced and continues to produce on the world, remains to be accounted for. This Strauss has not attempted. His myths, his collection of legends, can never be admitted as explaining the facts of the case.

23. (IV.) When Luke mentions the cure of one person, and Matthew and Mark mention the miraculous cure of two, Strauss fixes upon this as a contradiction:—as if such discrepancies, if discrepancies they can be called, are not to be found between

independent and cotemporary writers, of every age. Thus we find omissions of a remarkable kind in Livy as compared with Polybius (Livy xxii. 4; Polyb. iii. 116); and in Burnet as compared with Clarendon. What is easier than to show apparent contradictions between two cotemporaneous historians in their narrative of the most ordinary occurrence? And if we are determined to find them in any given case, I do not know any task easier than that of making them.\*

24. (V.) The existence of variations between the Evangelists is confirmatory of the credibility of the gospel history. Different and independent writers, without contradicting one another, have different modes of stating the same facts; and while we believe that the writers of the Gospels were preserved from error, apparent discrepancies were to be expected if the action natural to their own minds was to be made use of by the Holy Spirit. In this case diversities were unavoidable. If every writer has a manner peculiar to himself, in the same way as every artist has his own style, then there must have been variations between the four Gospels. How dissimilar is the Socrates of Xenophon to the Socrates of Plato! The source of this dissimilarity arose from the dissimilarity of the two biographers. Wherever there is a free and truthful action in conducting an argument which unfolds character, must there not be individual peculiarities—peculiarities referrible to the mental and moral constitution of the writer,—to his point of view, to his aims, to his outward circumstances?

25. Diversities, then, are confirmatory of the truthfulness and authority of the Evangelists. It is not for us to say what a miracle can accomplish. But that four persons writing independently one of another on the same subject, in different places, and at different times, should construct four narratives all precisely alike, each to each,—alike in what they said, and in what they did not say, seems an impossibility. To bring about such a result, there must have been a total subversion, and, for the time, a complete destruction, of the laws of man's intellectual and moral being. If this result were presented to us in the case of the four Evangelists, we should have grounds indeed to deny the independent action of the four, whose testimony would sink to a unit, and whose honesty would be open to grave suspicions. †

\* See Review of Macaulay's Hist. of England in Quarterly Review.

† Voices of the Church, p. 234.



26. (VI.) The diversities in question amount to very little. When it was announced that thousands of various readings were found in the different manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, the world was astounded. The fact was startling, because it was novel. But soon the novelty wore away, and it was discovered that the variations were unimportant,—not affecting a doctrine or precept of Christianity. And so it is with the diversities of the Evangelists. They do not affect either Christian history or Christian doctrine. The facts of the Gospel, the doctrines of the Gospel, and Jesus Christ the great and divine subject of the Gospel, remain untouched. They do so notwithstanding all the skill, and learning, and criticism of Strauss. The sacred writers, in despite of the infidel assaults of Germany, appear still before us in their child-like simplicity, narrating the power and glory of their Master, and not concealing nor extenuating their own infirmities. They are anxious only to be found faithful as ambassadors of Christ, in showing unto men the way of salvation. The variations between the Evangelists lie on the surface. These men with perfect simplicity tell you what they have to say, and they seem to care not for the effect it may produce.

27. (VII.) German criticism is at fault in treating the Gospel as a regular history: for the writings of the Evangelists lay no claim to this. Their design is to portray the personal character of Christ, exhibited during the period of his public ministry,—as showing that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. This theme filled their hearts, engaged their affections, and led them to think lightly, if they ever thought at all, of merely literary requirements. They were entirely absorbed in the greatness of their work, and in the importance of their message. Each Gospel is a condensed summary of the great facts, doctrines, and precepts of the Gospel, as related to Him who is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. The design of the Gospel is thus stated by one of the Evangelists:—"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." The Gospel, therefore, may be considered as an argument, founded on the works and the character of Christ, for the truth of Christianity, and the freeness and suitableness of the salvation which it offers. The great object of the Evangelists was to give a faithful account of Christian doctrine, and a true portraiture

of him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.

28. (VIII.) Strauss has shown himself to be deficient in the higher qualifications of a Biblical critic. It may be admitted that he has respectable talents, and that he has taken full advantage of the learning of his country. But he is totally regardless of all moral considerations. He is almost destitute of the knowledge of the heart,—of the knowledge of human nature. He reminds us of those itinerant musicians who produce a certain harmony by turning the handle of a machine. Were the mind of man a piece of mechanism, his results might be less questionable. But he has no motives, no spontaneous musical skill. He can neither play at sight nor make music from his own breast. If you write down his lesson, he may in time succeed in learning it; and he is not an indifferent player of old-fashioned and common-place tunes: but the soul of harmony is not in him, and therefore he cannot understand the moral harmonies of other men's souls.

29. Why, then, has his work been so celebrated? Because it is the melancholy result of almost all the labours which during half a century have been accomplished beyond the Rhine. It was seen that each labourer had brought a stone to this sad sepulchre. "Learned Germany started and fled before her own work."

30. As to the literary proof of the historical credibility of the Gospels, little can be added to the labours of Lardner;—labours to which the Germans are so much indebted. The moral argument is all-powerful and conclusive. The unity of the facts of the Gospel, of the doctrines of the Gospel, and of its great and divine subject, the Lord Jesus Christ, is so demonstrably certain, that the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, as the source of spiritual life,—the medium of a great salvation,—the directory for duty, and the guide to eternal life, remains unassailable, remains untouched and immortal. It stands out prominently in the face of the world, as little affected by the assaults of man as the sun shining in his strength. We may well mourn over the man whose depraved and perverted disposition leads him to try to persuade us, in opposition to evidence the most incontrovertible, that this Gospel, so fruitful of blessings to the human race, is the produce of fabulous traditions! Such is human folly, such is the desperate wickedness of the human heart!

## CHAPTER VI.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE EVIDENCES OF DIVINE REVELATION—MIRACLES—  
A MIRACLE DEFINED—THE GENERAL ARGUMENT STATED.

1. THE evidences of Divine Revelation may be classed under three heads, external, internal, and collateral. Under the first of these is included the argument which establishes the authenticity of Scripture, and the credibility of the history which it contains; together with the proofs from miracles and prophecy. The internal evidence is derived from a consideration of the doctrines taught, the morality inculcated, and the character of the Founder of Christianity, together with the marks of consistency, integrity, and piety of the writers of the Scriptures which are inherent in the record. Under this head is also included the adaptation of Christianity to the wants of mankind, and the effects which it produces in renovating and improving human nature. The collateral evidence embraces the consideration of those circumstances which furnish powerful proofs, though somewhat less direct than the former, of the authority of divine revelation. This classification, though it has been objected to, is sufficiently accurate and comprehensive for our purpose.

2. With respect to miracles, the primary external proofs of revelation, it is necessary that we distinctly define what we mean by them. A miracle is an extraordinary work or event, different from the established course of things, or known laws of nature, wrought by the power of God, for the proof of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the divine authority of some particular person.

3. According to this definition, the design of miracles is simply to make known to mankind, that it is the Almighty Maker and Ruler of all things who addresses them, and that whatever is accompanied with this species of evidence, comes from him, and claims their implicit belief and obedience. Whenever an effect happens which is an evident and sensible deviation from the laws known to be established in nature, such an effect cannot be accounted for but by admitting the interposition of God. On the other hand, no event, however uncommon or extraordinary, can, according to the definition given, be viewed as miraculous which does not absolutely exclude all possible solutions from natural causes.

4. The definition assumes the fact, that there is an established constitution of things; that the course of events is fixed; and that similar causes will produce similar effects: it assumes that the laws of nature (understanding by nature the globe we inhabit) are universal as they are uniform in their operation; that the order which pervades all nature, and on which we reckon with confidence, is the result, in regard to inanimate matter, not of necessary connexion, but of divine appointment. The will of God unites in exact regularity the phenomena with which we are surrounded. To a Being who is omnipresent, and whose will can accomplish all that is possible, it is no effort to effect by his own immediate efficiency every thing that exists.

All power is his, and whatsoe'er he wills,  
The will itself omnipotent fulfils.

5. It is equally evident and certain that no created power, without the permission of God, can disturb this arrangement, on the stability of which the happiness of man as well as of the inferior animals depends. The laws which the Creator has established for the accommodation of sentient and rational beings will not be suspended or reversed but by his own power; and as the order which has been fixed by infinite wisdom was the best that could have been chosen in reference to the beneficent purposes intended to be secured, we may be assured, that no deviation from that order ever has been, or ever will be, permitted, but for some very important end foreseen and provided for by the Almighty.

6. It would, however, be unreasonable to argue, as some have done, that because the laws of nature are thus uniform in their operation, or, in other words, because the mode in which the Deity conducts the government of the world is fixed with unvarying precision, therefore no deviation from those laws, no inversion of this order, is possible. For, what greater exercise of power is required to effect such deviation than is necessary to the maintenance of the course of nature? The same divine power which has created all things, and which upholds all things, can surely suspend or alter the constitution which it has established. No one who believes in the existence, perfections, and providence of God, can consistently doubt the possibility of miracles. To say that he is obliged to act only in the way in which he usually acts, is virtually to deny his being and perfections.

7. The question regarding the probability of miracles is of



a different nature. Being deviations from the laws established by infinite wisdom, they are not to be often expected, nor upon slight occasions. We cannot suppose that they will be performed excepting in circumstances and for ends worthy of the special interposition of God. I observe—

(I.) That to authenticate a revelation from God is a purpose worthy of miraculous interposition. So much is this the case, that the idea of a revelation includes that of miracles. A revelation cannot be made but by a miraculous interposition of the Deity. But what object can be worthier of his interposition than to reveal to mankind, involved in ignorance and error, his own being and perfections, the immortality of the soul, a future and eternal state, the mode in which the forgiveness of sins may be obtained, and the happiness of eternity secured? Of all the inhabitants of the earth, man is incomparably the noblest. Whatever, therefore, regards the interests of the species, is a grander concern than what regards either the inanimate or brute creation. If man was made for an after-state of immortality, whatever relates to that immortal state, or may conduce to prepare him for the fruition of it, must be immensely superior to that which concerns merely the transient enjoyments of the present life. How sublime then is the object which religion, and religion only, exhibits as the ground of supernatural interpositions. This object is no other than the interest of man, a reasonable and moral agent, the only being in this lower world which bears in his soul the image of his Maker; not the interest of an individual, but of the kind; not for a limited duration, but for eternity; an object, at least in one respect, adequate to the majesty of God.\*

8. A revelation from God, and miracles wrought by God in attestation of that revelation, or of the divine commission of those who make it, are essentially connected. On the supposition that a divine revelation is given, this mode of attesting its divinity is suitable and necessary. For though the instruments employed to convey such communication from God to his intelligent creatures were men of known veracity, whose affirmation would be admitted as sufficient evidence for any fact in accordance with the laws of nature; yet, as every man knows by experience, that a revelation from heaven is a deviation from these laws, he who lays claim to the character of a teacher sent from God must prove his commission by credentials which

\* Campbell on Miracles, p. 53.

indubitably bear the divine signature. Would not the power of working miracles be necessary and sufficient for this purpose? If, while there was nothing in the doctrines taught that was absurd, impious, or immoral, the teacher appealed to God for the reality of his claim to divine inspiration, by raising, in our presence, to life a person who had been dead, by calling upon him to come forth from his grave,—we should have the most complete evidence for believing that the instructor was sent from God. Would not the only objection to the truth of his declarations, arising from the extraordinary nature of his claims, be removed by the performance of the miracle? When so much preternatural power was visibly employed to authenticate the divine commission of this person, no one could have any reason to question his having received an equal portion of preternatural knowledge. A palpable deviation from the known laws of nature in one instance is a sensible proof that such a deviation is possible in another; and in such a case as this it is the witness of God to the truth of man. I therefore observe,—

9. (II.) That the evidence furnished by miracles to the truth or divine authority of the doctrines in proof of which they are wrought is complete. The nature of the evidence of miracles in attestation of a divine revelation may be briefly stated thus: A miracle, which is a sensible deviation from the laws of nature, cannot be wrought but by the power of God. If it be highly probable, considering the necessities of man, and the goodness of God, that a revelation should be given, it is not less probable, that the persons through whose agency such revelation is given should have the power of working miracles in confirmation of its truth. But from our knowledge of the wisdom and goodness of God, it appears altogether inconsistent with these attributes of his nature, that he should suffer a miracle to be wrought to establish a falsehood, and that he should do so in regard to concerns of infinite moment, since such procedure would leave his intelligent creatures in perpetual uncertainty,—an uncertainty that would be most painful to the virtuous, who have always wished most for a revelation. We have, therefore, a moral certainty that the evidence furnished by miracles is the seal of God himself to the truth of the facts and doctrines which it is designed to certify. It was the dictate of common sense which Nicodemus expressed, when he said to our Lord, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be

with him." Miracles are in their nature, and from the necessity of the case, extraordinary signs; but they are for that very reason universally understood to be the testimony of God.

10. The inspired teachers, accordingly, appealed to miracles as the proofs of their mission. Our Lord referred to his works as conclusive evidence of his having been sent from God: "I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.—If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." To the messengers sent by John the Baptist to ask, whether he were indeed the promised Messiah,—“Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up; and to the poor the gospel is preached.” Here we have, in the first place, a distinct recognition of miracles as an attestation of the divine authority of Christ, and of the doctrines which he taught: secondly, the fulfilment of ancient prophecy in Christ, both in regard to the works which he performed and the truths which he communicated, and by which he was thus proved to be the Messiah: and, thirdly, we have presented to our view that which forms the main subject of the internal evidence of Christianity, the admirable adaptation of the gospel to the condition and the wants of man.

11. Our Lord and his apostles expressly and uniformly asserted that they were teachers sent from God, and appealed to these evidences in proof of the validity of their claims. Commissioned to speak in the name and by the authority of God, they affirmed, that the doctrines which they taught ought to be received and believed in, as his oracles; and which, because they are the truths of God, have the sacred character and high authority of a divine revelation. “My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me,” said Jesus.—“I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”—“I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath instructed me, I speak these things.”

12. Indeed, the enemies of revelation have always admitted, that miracles furnish unquestionable evidence of the divine

authority of the doctrines in attestation of which they are wrought. Spinoza acknowledged, that if he could be convinced of the resurrection of Lazarus, he would break his whole system into pieces, and readily embrace the common faith of Christians. "I believe," said Woolston, "it will be granted on all hands, that the restoring of a person indisputably dead to life, is a stupendous miracle; and that two or three such miracles, well attested, and credibly reported, are enough to warrant the belief, that he who performed them was a divine agent, and invested with the power of God." The force of the evidence arising from this source was admitted by Hume himself, whose object in his *Essay on Miracles* is, not to show that miracles, if acknowledged to be true, are not sufficient evidence of divine revelation, but that no such works have ever been performed.

13. It thus appears that the truth of a doctrine may be positively concluded from miracles. We may deduce this conclusion with confidence, because it seems entirely repugnant to the character of God to lend the sanction of his power to establish the impositions of designing men. Far be it from us to suppose that the God of infinite goodness would do that by which the best of men, the most virtuous of the human race, would be deceived; or that the divine wisdom would employ, in confirmation of a falsehood, the means best adapted to establish the truth. The object for which the miracles of the Mosaic and Christian dispensations were wrought, was to confirm the divine authority of the doctrines which were taught; and if God, knowing that this was their object, should have allowed false doctrines to have been accompanied with miracles, he would have confirmed it, and have wished it to obtain credit,—a supposition which it is blasphemous to affirm.

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## CHAPTER VII.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE MIRACLE CONCLUSIVE—MIRACLES CANNOT ATTEST FALSEHOOD—THE FIVE CASES EXAMINED IN WHICH REAL MIRACLES ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN WROUGHT TO SUPPORT FALSEHOOD.

1. A MIRACLE, because it is the work of God alone, and because it is a work which none but God can perform, is conclusive evidence that the doctrine which it attests is from God. I endeavoured to establish this position in the former chapter. I must now advert to the opinions of those who think that



the Scriptures give countenance to the idea of miracles having been wrought in support of falsehood and in opposition to truth. A writer, to whom I have already referred,\* asks, "Is the miracle to command absolutely the obedience of those in whose sight it is done, or to whom it comes as an adequately attested fact, so that the doer and the doctrine shall be accepted as from God? It cannot be so, for side by side with the miracles which serve for the furthering of the kingdom of God, runs another line of wonders, counterworks of him, who is ever the ape of the Most High, who has still his caricatures of the holiest; and who knows that in no way can he so realize his character of Satan, or the Hinderer, as by offering that which shall either be accepted instead of the true, or being discovered false, shall bring the true into like discredit with itself. That it is meant in Scripture to attribute *real* wonders to him there is to me no manner of doubt. They are *lying* wonders, (2 Thess. ii. 9,) not because in themselves frauds and illusions, but because they are wrought to support the kingdom of lies.

2. "The fact, that the kingdom of lies has its wonders no less than the kingdom of truth, would be alone sufficient to convince us that miracles cannot be appealed to absolutely and simply, in proof of the doctrine which the worker of them proclaims; and God's word expressly declares the same, (Deut. xiii. 1—5.) A miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass. That which alone it claims for him at the first is a right to be listened to: it puts him in the alternative of being from heaven or from hell. The doctrine must first commend itself to the conscience as being good, and only then can the miracle seal it as divine. But the first appeal is from the doctrine to the conscience, to the moral nature in man."

3. It appears to me, that this view of miracles is as false as it is dangerous. I think I am entitled to hold it to be false from the observations which have been made respecting miracles, as the works of God exclusively, in preceding chapters. That it is dangerous is not less manifest, since it sets aside the conclusiveness of the evidence of miracles in attestation either of the divine origin of truth, or of the divine mission of him by whom they are brought to pass. It admits and maintains, in the first place, that miracles can be wrought by

\* Trench on Miracles.

created beings,—by Satan, and by men acting under his influence: and, secondly, that miracles can be wrought, and have been wrought, in support of falsehood: and, thirdly, Scripture is quoted in confirmation.

4. As to the passages of Scripture referred to, they have been already considered, and they will be presently more fully examined. But I may observe, that according to the theory of Mr. Trench, and of those who think with him, the evidence of miracles is virtually set aside;—the miracle, and the message which it accompanies, may be from hell as well as from heaven,—from the devil as well as from God,—from the kingdom of lies no less than from the kingdom of truth; and, consequently, the miracle implies nothing more than a call upon those before whom it is performed to listen to the message announced. Whether the message is a good word, or a bad word,—from God or from the devil, is to be ascertained, not by the miracle, but by its being approved of by the moral nature of fallen man. A tenet more opposed to reason, to common sense, and to Scripture, has not often been propounded. It divests miracles altogether of their character as attestations of divine truth, and of the divine commission of him by whom they are performed. It is opposed to the statements of the Oracles of God. Is it not opposed to the conclusion of Nicodemus, sanctioned by our Lord? “We know that thou art a teacher sent from God: for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.” Is it not contradictory to the statement of our Lord, when he rests on miracles his claim to have what he taught believed as truth from God? “The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.” That miracles have a primary evidential character is clearly taught by our Lord when he says, “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.”\*

5. The ground on which the theory in question rests is utterly false. It has sometimes been proposed as an hypothesis. It has been asked, Can miracles be admitted as evidence of the divine origin of palpably false and immoral doctrine? The

\* John x. 25, 37, 38; xv. 24.

answer of course has been, that they cannot. But in the hypothesis there is a double assumption of what is inadmissible. It is assumed, that God may work a miracle in support of what is false and immoral; or, that a created being may do so. We deny the possibility of Omnipotence working a miracle for such a purpose. The righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, cannot sanction what is opposed to righteousness. He cannot deny himself. A righteous ruler among men will never employ his power to promote deceit, and falsehood, and lawlessness. And as to the working of a miracle by a being inferior to God,—by Satan or his emissaries,—we deny the possibility. We firmly hold, that it is God alone who can create,—who can give life,—who can arrest or change the fixed laws of nature,—who can work a miracle. All created beings are not only inferior to Him, but infinitely inferior; and therefore to the agency of his divine power we limit the working of miracles. They are his seal to the divine commission of him whose mission they attest; and to the divine origin of the truth he communicates. They are so in every case without exception.

6. According to the theory under consideration, what very important purpose is served by miracles? That the reasoning founded upon it is reasoning in a circle, is most evident. It is trying the miracle by the doctrine, and the doctrine by the miracle. The source of the message is to be ascertained not by the miracle which accompanies it, but by the nature of the message, as tested by man's moral nature. And the origin of the miracle is to be ascertained by the doctrine. If this were a correct account of the matter, and Scripture is appealed to in support of it,—the evidence of miracles as primary and conclusive is set aside. It may be called in as somewhat confirmatory; but it is after the divine origin of the doctrine has been otherwise ascertained.

#### SECTION I.

THE CASE SUPPOSED BY MOSES, DEUT. XIII. 1—4.

7. “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God

with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him."

As regards this passage of Scripture, I observe, (I.) That even on the supposition that a miracle were wrought, by the "prophet or dreamer of dreams," it is not doctrine against miracle, but miracle against a fact previously established by a numerous train of miracles. Had not the exclusive divinity of Jehovah been attested by numerous miracles;—miracles which united their attestation in proclaiming Jehovah to be the only living and true God? was it possible that real miracles could be performed for establishing a doctrine opposed to this? God would not have wrought any such miracle—and we believe that no inferior being could have performed it. The sign or wonder supposed, therefore, was merely a prodigy, or it was a foretelling of some event that was near to come.

8. In either case, it was imposture,—just because God claims as his prerogative the prediction of future events, and the performance of miraculous works. He claims foreknowledge as exclusively his. "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.—I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." It is He alone who performs signs and wonders. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.—Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" \* The great doctrine was established by miracles of power and miracles of foretelling, that Jehovah the God of Israel is the only living and true God.

9. It is not to be admitted then that the supposed "prophet or dreamer of dreams" could work a real miracle;—or that a real miracle could have been wrought in contradiction to the great fact which it was the main design of the numerous and stupendous miracles of the Mosaic Dispensation to establish. The false prophets in Israel, in imitation of the heathen soothsayers, deceived by prodigies that appeared to be superhuman.

\* Is. xli. 21—24; xliv. 6—8; Ps. lxxii. 18; Exod. xv. 11.



It was not difficult to persuade men prone to idolatry, as the Israelites were, to listen favourably to those who exalted the gods of the heathen; and readily to believe that what these pretenders said, and what they did, gave evidence of their being under the direction of divine power. The warning therefore is given: "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God." Similar warnings are often addressed to Israel afterwards: "Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon.—Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee."\*

10. Thus the people of Israel were continually warned against pretenders to the possession of a knowledge of the future, and of miraculous power: and the warning was given on the ground, that Jehovah is the only true God,—and that he only knows things to come, and that he "alone doeth great wonders." Whenever the sacred writers occasionally mention any particular miracles,—whether of power or of knowledge, they affirm concerning every one of them separately, what they do concerning them all in general. Thus they affirm it to be the sole and exclusive prerogative of God to raise the dead, to open the eyes of the blind, to tread upon the waves of the sea, to still the noise of its waves, to reveal secret and distant transactions, to foretell future events, and to search the heart of man.† These declarations of Scripture, though they are particularly levelled against the false pretences to prophecies and miracles among the Pagans, are no more to be reconciled with the Devil's possessing a supernatural power than with the opinion of any heathen gods possessing that power. If any being whatever can perform miracles besides God, it is not true that God alone can perform them."‡

\* Jer. xxvii. 9; Isa. xlvii. 12, 13.

† Deut. xxxii. 39; 1 Sam. ii. 6; 2 Cor. i. 9; Ps. cxlvi. 8; Job ix. 8; Ps. lxxv. 9; cvii. 29; Dan. ii. 28, 29—47; Isa. xlii. 9; xlv. 21; xlvii. 9, 10.

‡ Farmer on Miracles, ch. iii. s. 5.

11. (II.) The language of the passage under consideration is decisive against the idea of a real miracle being wrought in the case supposed. How are these pretenders designated? "A dreamer of dreams:"—epithets which are expressive of contempt;—and epithets which would not, as it appears to me, be applied by God himself to persons who could really produce those deviations from the ordinary course of nature called miracles. It is added, "The Lord thy God doth prove thee." How was he to prove his people? Not by employing his almighty power at the bidding of base pretenders: this would have been to act in concert with them;—procedure which we dare not impute to the holy Lord God. But he was to prove them by permitting such deceivers to arise in the course of his providence for the trial of their faith in him, and their allegiance to him as the King of Israel. The denunciation of the prophet or dreamer of dreams is conclusive evidence of the accuracy of this view. "And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death, because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God." Death was to be inflicted by the command of God; and therefore it cannot be supposed that he could employ his mighty power to sanction falsehood at the bidding of impostors by working a real miracle;—impostors doomed to die.

12. Does any one allege that the power by which the supposed miracle was wrought was from beneath—from Satan, not from God? First, I deny that Satan has any such power by which to support his emissaries: and secondly, if he had such power, it is under the control of Omnipotence: and if, notwithstanding, God permitted the exercise of it for the support of idolatry and immorality, in that case we must hold that he gave his concurrence to the putting of what is the same as the seal of Heaven to a lie;—of supporting falsehood by evidence in all respects similar, and of the same nature, with the evidences by which divine truth has been established.

13. (III.) That real prophecies and real miracles are not meant in the passage under consideration, is farther evident from the nature of the test which God gave to his people by which to distinguish the true prophets from the false. This test is mentioned in Deut. xviii. 20—22: "But the prophet, who shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in

thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." This passage is consistent with Deut. xiii. 1—5, on the supposition that the interpretation given of it is the true one, namely, that no real miracle was wrought: otherwise the passages are irreconcilable.

But all Scripture must be explained in consistency with itself. It is divine truth throughout; and one part of divine truth cannot be opposed to another.

## SECTION II.

### THE CASE OF THE EGYPTIAN MAGICIANS.

14. I cannot understand how any persons with ordinary intelligence could imagine the works of these men to have been real miracles. That they were not, will, I hope, be evident from the few following observations.

(I.) They were not, and could not be, the works of God. And yet there have been pious men who maintained that they were. But the idea is revolting. How can any enlightened person suppose that God was alternately affirming and denying, —attesting and disproving,—the same thing? It cannot be supposed, and therefore, I will not reason the matter.

15. (II.) The works of the magicians were not real miracles as the works of Satan. And yet the contrary has been affirmed. A species of Manicheism has continued in the Christian Church, according to the doctrine of which it has been maintained, that the Devil, the god of this world, contests the matter with the great Creator;—that, in the case of the magicians, there was a trial of strength, in which for a time it was doubtful who had the advantage. This notion is absurd in itself, and it is at variance with the oracles of God. I have already affirmed, that Satan cannot work a real miracle. For, even if it were granted,—which it is not,—that Satan has power to work a real miracle, that power must be under the control of Almighty God. And if a holy and righteous God cannot use his own power directly to attest anything false, or to do evil for any end,—he will not, for the same reason, allow a real miracle to be wrought, to sanction falsehood, by the agency of another. In the circumstances now under consideration, his permitting a real miracle to be wrought for such

a purpose, would be the same thing as if he himself directly performed it.

16. (III.) It is implied by the phraseology used in the narrative of Moses that the works of the magicians were not true miracles. The phrase is, "They also did in like manner with their enchantments." Moses does not, by the words he has selected, express anything more than an apparent resemblance between the effects produced by the enchantments of the magicians, and the wonderful works of Almighty Power. How was this resemblance effected? By Pharaoh's giving information to the magicians of what Moses had done. They had thus ample time to prepare for the work of deception. Accordingly, when the fourth plague was inflicted without any interval of time being permitted between the prediction and the infliction, these wise men utterly failed in their attempt, and acknowledged their weakness. "They did so with their enchantments, to bring forth lice; but they could not." On the supposition that the three former performances were miracles, why should they have failed in this? "Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God."

17. (IV.) As conclusive confirmation of the opinion, that no real miracles were wrought, and that the power to perform such wonderful works was wanting, the king never appealed to that power, and never applied to those who were supposed to possess it, for the removal of any of the plagues. It was far more natural, one would think, to do so,—to counteract the working of Moses in producing evil, than to help it, and to augment it:—to take away the plagues than to add to them. But instead of applying to the magicians for this purpose, "Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the Lord that he may take away the frogs from me and from my people." He only who had inflicted these sore evils could remove them; and for this end it was necessary that Moses and Aaron should pray unto God to take them away. What further evidence is needful to prove that the enchantments of these Egyptian magicians were juggleries,—were all impostures?

### SECTION III.

THE CASE OF FALSE PROPHETS, OR PRETENDERS TO THE MESSIAHSHIP—THE CASE OF THOSE WICKED PERSONS WHO IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT WILL SAY, THEY HAVE WROUGHT WONDERFUL WORKS.

18. It has been attempted to found an argument for the working of real miracles in attestation of false claims and false doctrines, on what is said in the Gospels respecting false



prophets and pretenders to the Messiahship:—that they should show such signs and wonders, that, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived.—Matt. xxiv. 24.

19. Our Lord, by whom the appearance of these pretenders was foretold, could not mean by their showing “great signs and wonders,” that they would work genuine miracles, because this would be a subversion of the evidence of miracles;—a subversion of it, too, by Him who had always appealed to it in support of his own claims;—and, consequently, putting their claims on a level with his own. We say, then, that it is impossible our Lord could have meant by signs and wonders real miracles.

20. What did he mean by these words? That those pretenders would do, what we know they actually did, put forth great pretensions, like Simon Magus, and by mighty swelling words, and various artifices, deceive multitudes. We need not here quote the history of the period. It furnishes a striking comment on the words of our Lord; and shows that while it is consistent with God’s righteous government in this state of probation, to permit wicked men and their delusive arts to exist in this world, many will give their ear to them because they are in harmony with their own deceptive hearts.

21. As to those who are represented by our Lord as saying in the last day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works?”—I have only to say, that the tendency of the works, to the performance of which they are said to lay claim, was not to confirm error and imposture, but to support the cause and the truth of Christ. Besides, it does not appear that the gift of miracles was confined in the early age of the Church to the converted,—as we learn from the case of Judas. The exercise of the gift was profitable for confirming the disciples in the truth, even when employed by men who were not personally under the sanctifying and saving power of divine truth. They laid stress on the possession of gifts, and overlooked the necessity of grace to change the heart,—to create fallen man anew in Christ Jesus, and to prepare him for admission into the kingdom of God. Hence the professed ground of their claim to an entrance into heaven.

22. We learn from this, that it is possible to be distinguished by great gifts;—gifts which may be employed for the promotion of truth, and yet be finally cast away!

## SECTION IV.

THE LYING WONDERS ASCRIBED TO ANTICHRIST—TO EVIL SPIRITS.

23. There are signs and lying wonders ascribed to Antichrist. "Even him," says the apostle, "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. It is scarcely necessary to make any explanatory observations on this passage, the language of which makes the meaning very clear.

24. It is true, a writer to whom I have already referred, (Mr. Trench,) makes the matter very easy by setting the miracles altogether aside, and deciding by the nature of the doctrine. "When the mind and conscience witness against the doctrine, not all the miracles in the world have a right to demand submission to the word which they seal. On the contrary, the great act of faith is to believe, in the face, and in despite, of them all, in what God has implanted in the soul of the holy and the true. Miracles, in this case, are warnings to us that we keep aloof, for they tell us that not merely lies are here,—for to that the conscience bore witness already,—but that he who utters them is more than a common deceiver, is eminently a liar and an antichrist, a false prophet. That in Scripture it is meant to attribute real wonders to him (Satan) there is no manner of doubt. They are lying wonders, (2 Thess. ii. 9,) not because in themselves frauds and illusions, but because they are wrought to support the kingdom of lies."\*

25. Mr. Trench, then, supposes that real miracles are wrought in support of lies, of the kingdom of lies:—a notion which, from what has been already advanced, I may assume to be at variance with reason, with common sense, and with Scripture, and to be altogether subversive of the evidence of miracles. The apostle speaks of signs and lying wonders supporting the kingdom of darkness: they are lying wonders because they are in themselves delusive and false; and also because the things which they attest are lies. They are lying wonders, and therefore they are not real miracles. They are such only as are suited to the character and the designs of the father of lies—the supporter of Antichrist,—whose signs and wonders are all lying,—whose coming therefore is with all deceivable-

\* Trench on Miracles.

ness of unrighteousness;—whose operations are all “strong delusions.” Such is the description given of them by the pen of inspiration. How any man, who believes in the divine authority of revelation, and who has a clear perception of the immutable distinction between truth and error, between righteousness and unrighteousness, can regard them as genuine miracles, is to me unaccountable.

26. This notion, I apprehend, is to be traced to the vulgar belief in the superhuman power of evil spirits. What is the origin of this belief? Is it the doctrine of Manicheism; or the allusions in the Old Testament Scriptures to wizards, necromancers, and witches? Whatever it may be, this is certain, that Scripture gives us no ground for maintaining, that the inferior invisible agents to whose existence it bears testimony, have any power to interfere with the laws that regulate the department of the universe with which we are connected. If they have no such power, according to the information given of them in the only book which tells us of their existence, by what fond imagination is it assumed, that they must have this power? Whatever powers they possess, they are all in subjection to Him who is Lord of all;—to the God who cannot lie,—and who, therefore, cannot himself, nor by the agency of any others, work a real miracle, but in attestation and support of Truth. “As to the idea of evil spirits, in any imaginable circumstances, working miracles—real miracles,—in contravention of the mind and will of God,—it has ever appeared to my view as nothing short of the most daring blasphemy to imagine it.”\*

#### SECTION V.

THE SUPPOSED MIRACLE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION—THE TIME WHEN  
MIRACULOUS GIFTS WERE WITHDRAWN.

27. As to the supposed miracle of transubstantiation, this is not the place to expose the contradictions, absurdities, and impossibilities involved. The absolute impossibility of converting the substance of the bread into the previously existing substance of the body of the Lord Jesus, may be shown by several demonstrations as clear and strong as any logical or mathematical demonstration can be. As to its alleged miraculous character, it is no miracle,—for a miracle is a matter of fact, the reality of which must be tested by the senses. It is by

\* Wardlaw on Miracles, p. 105.

the united testimony of the senses that the reality of miracles can be ascertained: but to what does transubstantiation make its appeal? Not to the evidence of the senses,—for it contradicts that evidence,—but to human credulity,—human credulity excited by priestly artifice. It sets aside the evidence upon which alone miracles can rest; and, consequently, in so far as its supporters can carry their dogma, they subvert a main foundation of Divine Revelation.

28. It is indeed remarkable, that the Roman Catholic Church should be the only church that has claimed a continuance of miraculous power, and that boasts of this distinction, inasmuch as it is one of the distinctions that characterise the apostasy—the man of sin—the son of perdition,—and the mystical Babylon. “He doeth great wonders—and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the Beast.”\* These miracles are elsewhere called “lying wonders:” that is, as I have shown, they are not real miracles. Real miracles they cannot be, because they are characterised as lying and deceiving. But real miracles are not intended to deceive, and never can deceive, inasmuch as they attest truth, and truth only.

29. If it be asked, When did miracles cease? When was the power of working miracles withdrawn? We answer, about the middle of the second century. We fix upon that period, because the apostles, who alone had the extraordinary power of communicating miraculous gifts by the imposition of hands, were removed from this world; and also the persons on whom they bestowed the gifts were dead, about that period. Besides, there was no longer any occasion to continue miraculous powers. The canon of Scripture was closed: divine revelation was complete; and if with all the evidence by which it was attested men would not believe, neither would they believe though miracles had been continued,—though one rose from the dead.

30. If it be said, that miracles were wrought during the Mosaic dispensation, and they ought to be continued during the Christian dispensation; it may be replied, that until the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures was complete, it was proper and necessary that miracles should have been wrought: but the canon of the New Testament was closed before the death of the last of the apostles; and, therefore, the continuance of

\* Rev. xiii. 13, 14.



miracles much beyond that period was unnecessary. Beyond the middle of the second century, we have no evidence of miracles having been wrought. That the leading men in the Church were unwilling to confess the withdrawal of this extraordinary power, was quite natural; but that it was withdrawn about the period mentioned appears in a very high degree probable.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE MARKS BY WHICH MIRACLES MAY BE CERTAINLY DISTINGUISHED—  
THE REQUISITE CONDITIONS OF A CREDIBLE MIRACLE.

1. WHILE all must admit that miracles are effects of supernatural power, may there not be difficulty in distinguishing a miracle from some of those changes upon material substances which his growing knowledge of nature enables man to produce? If it really were the case, that the class of phenomena called miracles could not, with any certainty, be distinguished from the other phenomena connected with the discoveries of human science, the obstacle would be insuperable. But, in truth, there is no such ground of uncertainty. The broad distinction between these two classes of phenomena may be perceived even by uncultivated minds. Who would class the effects of medicine on disease, or of the loadstone on iron, with the raising of the dead to life, or the stilling of a tempest? Even were it true that in some rude states of society men might mistake the one for the other, or that some of the phenomena in the two different classes could not easily be distinguished, what does any such ambiguity take from the clearness with which others may be discriminated among all classes of men, and in almost every state of society? It is upon the clear distinction which can be discerned in these by all men, and in all ages, that the proof of revelation proceeds. The evidence from miracles for divine revelation exists in phenomena which were at the time, which now are, and which always will be, thought miraculous; which the progress of science has never had the least tendency to thrust from their supernatural place, and the real character of which must be determined, not by the opinion of ignorant, but by the judgment of the most cultivated minds.

2. Nor is there any force in the remark of some deistical writers, that a miracle being that which exceeds the power of

nature, we cannot know what exceeds it, unless we knew the utmost extent of the power of nature,—a thing which no man pretends to know,—therefore no man can certainly know whether any event be miraculous. For, as Leslie remarks,\* though we do not know the utmost extent of the power of nature, perhaps in any one thing, it does not follow that we know not the nature of any thing in some measure. For example, though I do not know the utmost extent of the power of fire, yet I certainly know that it is the nature of fire to burn; therefore, if I see three men taken off the street in their common wearing apparel, and, without any preparation, cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and that the flame was so fierce that it burned up those men that threw them in,—while the persons who were thrown in should walk up and down in the bottom of the furnace, and I should see a fourth person with them of glorious appearance, like the Son of God; and that they should come up again out of the furnace without any harm, or so much as the smell of fire upon themselves or their clothes,—I could not be deceived in thinking there was a stop put to the nature of fire as to these men, and, at the same time, that it had its effect upon the men whom it burned.

3. Leslie's four rules for distinguishing miraculous events from all impostures are the following: First, That the matters of fact be such, as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. Secondly, That it be done publicly in the face of the world. Thirdly, That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed. Fourthly, That such monuments and such actions or observances be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.

The first two rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men at the time when such matter of fact was said to be done, because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it. For example, suppose any man should pretend that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark on dry land, the waters standing like walls on both sides; I say, it is morally impossible that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and say that this was a notorious

\* A Short and Easy Method with the Deists, p. 41.

falsehood, for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, or had gone over on dry land. Therefore I take it for granted, that no such imposition could be put upon men at the time when such public matter of fact was said to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains that such matter of fact might be invented some time after, when the men of that generation in which the thing was said to be done are all past and gone; and the credulity of after-ages might be imposed upon, to believe that things were done in former ages which were not. For this, the last two rules secure us as much as the first two rules in the former case; for whenever such a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were said to remain of it, but likewise that public actions and observances were constantly used ever since the matter of fact was said to be done, the deceit must be detected by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who must know that no such actions or observances were ever used by them. For example, suppose I should now invent a story of such a thing done a thousand years ago, I might perhaps get some to believe it; but if I say, that not only such a thing was done, but that, from that day to this, every man, at the age of twelve years, had a joint of his little finger cut off; and that every man in the nation did want a joint of such finger; and that this institution was said to be part of the matter of fact done so many years ago, and vouched as a proof and confirmation of it, and as having descended without interruption, and been constantly practised in memory of such matter of fact all along, from the time that such matter of fact was done: I say, it is impossible I should be believed in such a case, because every one could contradict me as to the mark of cutting off a joint of a finger; and that being part of my original matter of fact, must demonstrate the whole to be false.

5. These four rules or marks all meet in the miraculous events by which the divine authority of the Mosaic and Christian dispensations was established, as will be shown afterwards.

6. The requisite conditions of a credible miracle are:—

(I.) That the nature of the work or fact alleged be indubitably miraculous. It must be of such a nature as to exclude every possible solution from natural causes, and to be attri-

butable only to the power of God. Thus, with a word to give sight to the blind, and to raise the dead, are manifestly works which none but God can perform.

7. (II.) The circumstances in which the miracle is wrought must be such as cannot possibly belong to any delusion or imposture. A fact may, in its own nature, appear to have been miraculous, and yet to have been published to the world in such a manner as to render its having been really so exceedingly doubtful. In order that all doubt be removed, it is necessary, first, that it be published to the world at the time when it is said to have been performed ; secondly, that it be extensively published in the place where it has been wrought ; thirdly, that the circumstances under which it is published are such as satisfy us that it underwent a careful examination, and must have been detected had it been an imposture. When these conditions are accurately applied to facts said to have been miraculous, they will form a certain rule whereby we may distinguish between that which is real and indisputable and that which is spurious.

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## CHAPTER IX.

THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH A MIRACLE MAY BE AUTHENTICATED BY TESTIMONY—THE FORCE OF THE EVIDENCE OF TESTIMONY NOT IMPAIRED BY LAPSE OF TIME.

1. THERE is no other evidence than that of testimony by which the miracles which were wrought in attestation of divine revelation can be rendered credible to us. This species of evidence is called probable in philosophical language, to distinguish it from that which is sensible or demonstrative, without reference to the measure of certainty attached to it. Our belief that Cæsar and Pompey really lived, and that the plague once visited London, is founded on probable evidence, that is, on the evidence of testimony, and the person who should doubt these facts, on that account, would be suspected of lunacy.

2. Miracles, like any other facts which are cognizable by the senses, are capable of being proved by testimony. It is just as certain that their reality can be certified by testimony as that their reality can be proved by the evidence of the senses. If I witnessed, in common with many others, a person who was known to be dead and buried, raised from the



grave, and, in the possession of life and health, walk abroad before our eyes, it is impossible that I, or any of those who saw this work, could have any doubt of its truly miraculous nature. But how are we who witnessed the miracle to produce conviction of its reality in the minds of those who did not witness it? This can only be done by the testimony of the witnesses; and we maintain, that in such a case as is now supposed, this testimony is sufficient. For, although the work certified to have been performed is a miracle, and is therefore out of the usual course of nature, and would indeed lose its beneficial office if it were not so, it cannot thence be inferred that it is a violation of the laws of nature, allowing the term to include a regard to moral tendencies. The laws by which a wise and holy God governs the world, cannot, unless he is pleased to reveal them, be learned in any other way than from testimony; since, on this supposition, nothing but testimony can bring us acquainted with the whole series of his dispensations, and this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary previously to our correctly inferring those laws. Testimony, therefore, must be admitted as constituting the principal means of discovering the real laws by which the universe has been regulated; that testimony assures us that the course of nature has often been interrupted to produce important moral effects; and we must not at random disregard such testimony, because, in estimating its credibility, we ought to look almost infinitely more at the moral than at the physical circumstances connected with any particular event.\*

3. We have already referred to Hume's objection to the sufficiency of testimony to authenticate miracles, and we deem it unnecessary to take any further notice of it. We shall only mention the conditions under which a miracle may be authenticated by testimony.

(I.) The alleged miracle must have all the conditions mentioned in the last chapter, namely, that it was published to the world at the time when it is said to have been performed,—that it was extensively made known in the place where it was wrought,—that the circumstances under which it was published are such as ought to satisfy us that it underwent a careful examination, and must have been detected had it been an imposture.

(II.) The opportunities of the witnesses must have been

\* Gregory's Letters, p. 179. Vinu's Sermons on the Credibility of Miracles.

such as shall have given the fullest satisfaction. They must have had a sufficient knowledge of the facts which they attest. In short, nothing less than the evidence of their senses is admissible to constitute them competent to bear testimony to the facts alleged.

(III.) Circumstances must have been such as to have rendered their being deceived impossible. For this purpose, the miracles must have been wrought, not in the presence of a few friends, but in such situations as shall have attracted the notice and investigation of even the uncandid and prejudiced; in situations where, if the witnesses themselves were deceived, every individual of the multitude present, the most implacable enemies not excepted, must have been under the influence of the same delusion; and, finally, the nature of the miracles must have been of that importance that they shall have awakened the attention of all to an examination of their truth.

(IV.) Every motive to imposture must have been excluded. It must clearly appear that neither the love of fame, nor of riches, nor of honour and power, influenced the witnesses in their testimony; but that they were actuated by a conviction of the truth, and not of the truth only, but of the notoriety of the events which they relate. It is requisite that the witnesses be of that character, and should have been placed in such peculiar circumstances, as will make it clearly appear to be impossible that any imposture could have been practised.

(V.) As there could have been no motive to imposture, so the impossibility of the witnesses obtaining credit in the first instance, except on the admission of their veracity, must be manifest. For how could miracles be performed in the circumstances just described, without awakening attention, and exciting to the strictest investigation? And if they are proved to be false by such a scrutiny, how can the testimony of the witnesses be received as true? Or, supposing that only the witnesses themselves saw the miracles, or the extraordinary works which they regard as such, performed, it would be necessary for them to give the most indisputable proofs of their veracity before their testimony could be received as conclusive evidence, or be considered as absolutely true. And as the testimony, if true, would be found to involve consequences the most important in regard to the highest interests of man, assent to it could not be obtained without strict examination and full conviction.

4. (VI.) The fair conclusion from these remarks is, that wherever miracles have been performed under the circumstances now mentioned, attended with evidence similar to that alluded to, and admitted by full and almost universal assent to be real, the testimony respecting them is true, and merits, and always will continue to merit, the belief of mankind. This conclusion is strengthened when the witnesses are numerous, and when their adherence to their testimony involves great sacrifices. When, in place of two or three, which are deemed sufficient in the most important concerns of human life, there are hundreds of witnesses, all agreeing in their testimony, and when there is no opposing testimony, the evidence acquires the highest degree of force,—force which the most ingenious sophistry can never weaken, and which confirmed scepticism will in vain assail. If poverty, persecution, and death, were the manifest consequences of persisting in bearing such a testimony, and if in defiance of these, all the witnesses continued firm to the last, have we not the strongest evidence that the facts attested can admit of, that they are true miracles?

5. This will appear to be the case, especially when the witnesses were under the bias of a religion opposed to that which the miracles are designed to establish. The antipathies occasioned by a difference of religious belief are the strongest that human nature is capable of; and, accordingly, while a Christian might feel predisposed to admit the reality of a miracle in support of Christianity, he would feel strongly prepossessed against the belief of a miracle in support of Mohammedanism. His attachment in the one case would make him acquiesce in evidence less than sufficient; his aversion in the other would make him require evidence more than sufficient. If the faith of the witnesses, then, stood originally in opposition to the doctrine attested by the miracles,—if the only account that can be given of their conversion is the conviction which the miracles produced in them,—if the evidence arising from the miracles performed in proof of a doctrine disbelieved, and consequently hated before, did in fact surmount that obstacle and conquer all the opposition arising thence, the presumption is strong in favour of that evidence, just as strong a presumption in its favour as it would have been against it, had all their former zeal, and principles, and prejudices, co-operated with the evidence in gaining an entire assent.

6. It has been alleged, however, by those who cannot

deny the completeness of the evidence furnished by the testimony of those who were eye-witnesses of our Lord's miracles, that its force has been diminished by the lapse of time. Whatever truth may be in this in regard to evidence transmitted from age to age by oral tradition, it is totally inapplicable to evidence originally recorded in a book, and transmitted by means of that book from generation to generation. This evidence remains in all its original strength as long as the record which contains it exists. Take any ancient event that is well attested, such, for example, as the retreat of the Ten Thousand, and we are persuaded that the certainty of that event having taken place is as great at this moment as it was on the return of the Greek army, or immediately after Xenophon had published his narrative.

7. But does not this reasoning apply with far greater force to the evidence which the New Testament furnishes to the doctrines and miracles of our Lord? The witnesses of these were enemies as well as friends: they were recorded in the very age in which the doctrines were taught, and the miracles performed, by four different authors, who themselves were eye-witnesses; and their record was, not many years after it was written, translated into all the languages of the Roman empire. It was from the beginning appealed to by the friends and enemies of the Christian religion as an authentic document, which contained all the principles of that religion. We shall afterwards see that this document has reached us unmutilated and entire; and so long as it exists in this state of perfect integrity, even to the end of time, the evidence of the reality of the gospel miracles will be as convincing as it could have been to those who were cotemporary with Christ and his apostles. It will be so, for this obvious reason, that no testimony can, in the nature of things, be rendered less credible by any other cause, than the loss or want of some of those conditions which first made it credible. "In what possible manner, for example, can the evidence on which we believe the facts related in the Gospels be less than that on which those facts were accredited by Christians in the second or third centuries? They possessed the standard writings of the evangelists; so do we: what those books then contained, they now contain; and the invention of printing seems likely, under the care of Providence, to preserve them genuine to the end of time."



8. Besides, the Scriptures are not like any other writing. There are circumstances in operation in regard to them which will be the means of securing their transmission in a perfect state to the latest age. The Christian community, which had its origin in the very age when Christ taught his doctrines and wrought his miracles, will continue to exist till the end of time; and while it continues to exist, the sacred volume will be preserved without mutilation or change. In the preservation of that volume, millions of the human race will always continue to be deeply interested; and while it remains what it now is, the evidence by which miracles are proved will lose nothing of its original force.

9. Indeed, it may be maintained with some show of truth, that we, who are called to examine the credibility of the miracles of the gospel by testimony, are more favourably situated, than if we had been enabled to judge of them by sensible evidence. This, however, is only matter of opinion; but this is certain, that our position is not less favourable for obtaining as full a conviction, by patient inquiry after truth, of the reality of the miracles by which divine revelation is attested, than that of those who were eye-witnesses of them. "Because thou hast *seen*, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

10. With regard to the question which has sometimes been asked, Might not a divine revelation be satisfactorily attested by furnishing the supernatural evidence of immediate inspiration to every one to whom the claim was submitted?—we can form no sounder opinion than of the possibility of any other contingency. We know from the fact that it did not enter into the purpose of God to give to all that inspiration which was confined to the first teachers of Christianity. We also know that the procedure of God in this respect is analogous to that character of all his dispensations, which does not for the accomplishment of ends accumulate means, but leaves the effect to be produced by the means already existing. Thus, in natural religion, man is left to obtain, by the exercise of his reason, the elementary principles of religion and morality. Should he decline to give the requisite attention, ignorance will be the penalty of his negligence. In like manner, evidence is furnished by the numerous miracles which they wrought, and by the inherent excellency of the truths which they taught, of the inspiration and divine mission of teachers sent from God;

this evidence, in its original entireness, is conveyed through the testimony of eye-witnesses to us, so that we also may have rational ground of belief; but the man who, from indolence, or prejudice, or the engrossing influence of occupations which he feels to be more pleasing or more important, gives no attention to Christianity or to its claims, is allowed, as the award of his negligence, to remain an unbeliever.

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## CHAPTER X.

ON THE QUESTION, WHAT CONSTITUTES MIRACLES CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF THE DOCTRINES THEY ARE DESIGNED TO ESTABLISH?

1. THOUGH an answer has already been given to the question which forms the subject of this chapter, its great importance, in relation to the argument furnished by miracles in support of divine revelation, claims for it a marked and full consideration. What is that which connects the miracles wrought with the person who claims to be a divine messenger? Upon what ground do we connect them with him, more than with any other person or concomitant circumstance?

2. He who announces a miracle as about to be performed in immediate subserviency to his purpose, while the annunciation is followed with a miraculous work, is one who either had himself the power of performing it, or who acted in concert with the power. When the annunciation has been repeatedly made, and as often as made followed by the miraculous effect, where can be the room for suspicion that the knowledge has been feigned, and that in a connexion so intimate and regular there can be anything fortuitous?

3. But, in order to constitute miracles proofs of a divine revelation, it is necessary to connect the power that performs them with the volition and appointment of God, so as to be warranted in considering them as the credentials of his messengers. The only ground on which this step can be made, must be sought for in the moral attributes of God, as the Ruler of the universe. If we can get footing here, the whole proof is completely and firmly established. Taking this truth as a foundation, we can say, that an appeal to miracles as evidence of a divine mission, is calling the righteous Lord to witness; and that, as certainly as the Lord is righteous, the miracles are his testimony to the asserted fact, or to the truth promulgated.

Nor does it impeach his righteousness, that through the cunning of politicians and priests on the one hand, and the indolent credulity of mankind on the other, false pretensions to divine authority have succeeded; because the blame is attachable solely to those who would not employ the means with which God has furnished them for their safety. But in the case which supposes miracles permitted to carry on imposture, there is a change in the constitution of nature for the very purpose of supporting fraud,—a change from which no benefit and nothing but evil can proceed,—a change which, as it certainly proclaims the interposition of more than human power, must be connected, either mediately or immediately, with the purpose of the Sovereign Ruler, by whom it might have been prevented.

4. (I.) We cannot admit that miracles have been, or ever will be, wrought in attestation of false doctrines; because no miracle can be wrought but by the act of God; and we cannot conceive it possible that the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, would even seem to give a sanction to what is false or immoral. We hold it as an elementary principle, that a miracle, according to the definition which we have given of it, never has been wrought but by the direct sanction and power of God. Holding this opinion, we must also hold that a miracle is the seal of Heaven to whatever it attests; if, therefore, that seal were appended to what is false or immoral, would not the righteous Ruler of the universe give his sanction to what is false or immoral?—a thing which his character as the God of truth and of holiness renders impossible, and which it is almost blasphemous to suppose.

5. In this view of the subject, we admit that the righteousness of God's character is assumed. But when we proceed on the fundamental principle of natural religion, that the only living and true God is the God of infinite goodness, and truth, and righteousness, we are entitled to maintain that a miracle never can be wrought in attestation of what is false or immoral.

6. (II.) The cases mentioned in Scripture, to which we have already alluded, which are supposed, if not to contradict, at least not to favour, this view of the subject, are in accordance with it. These cases are, the supposed miracles of false prophets, Deut. xiii. 1—3; the wonders wrought by the magicians of Egypt; the signs and mighty works of false

prophets; the wonderful works which some of the wicked in the last day are represented as claiming; and, lastly, the demoniacal possessions referred to in the New Testament.

7. (III.) It is only the Jewish and Christian revelations that profess to have been attested by miracles; and in their case the morality entirely harmonizes with the evidence of miracles. The question as to the possibility of miracles being wrought in attestation of falsehood and immoral doctrine is purely speculative; since it is certain that no such attestation has ever yet been given. The Bible alone is the only book that professes to have been accompanied by the evidence of miracles; and, infidels being judges, the morality of the Bible is admirably fitted to promote the true dignity and happiness of man. It cannot be denied that the only volume in the world which has been supported by the evidence of miracles is throughout, in its spirit, doctrines, precepts, and tendency, worthy of the God of infinite purity and goodness. The facts of the case are thus in entire accordance with the theory, that miracles, wherever and whenever they are wrought, are evidence of a revelation from God.

8. (IV.) The charge of reasoning in a circle, in the view we have taken of this subject, is unfounded. It is alleged, that it is first proving the miracle to have come from God by the doctrine, and then the doctrine to have come from him by the miracle. But this is a misrepresentation of the nature of our argument. What we maintain is, that what is obviously false and immoral cannot proceed from God.

9. But, in truth, there is no reason to fear that we shall have to encounter the attestation of miracles accompanying false and immoral doctrine. The notion is entirely speculative: and according to the view which we have taken, and have already given, it can never exist as a practical reality. Wherever we have miracles we trace the finger of God; and wherever we have this manifestation of his wonder-working hand, we have all the moral certainty that his own immaculate character can afford, that the doctrine taught is a doctrine according to godliness. The mere working of a miracle by a man who claimed to have a message from God to mankind, would be regarded as a proof of his veracity, and would remove the prior presumption against the reality of his claim. The manifestation of supernatural power as the sign of the messenger's veracity, would instantly remove the improbability of



his being charged with a supernatural communication. When, in addition to this, we take into account the known virtue and good sense of the teacher, who thus vindicates his claim to inspiration, the tendency of the doctrine he delivers, and its effect on those who receive it, the evidence is the most full and complete that can well be conceived.

In reference to the whole of this subject, I remark,—

10. (I.) That miracles must be regarded as the primary and authenticating evidence of a divine revelation, and as having the precedence of prophecy and internal evidence. These indeed are confirmatory evidences of the greatest value; but the evidence of miracles is sufficient to furnish a divine attestation of the doctrine in support of which they are wrought, just because they are, and must be, from God.

11. (II.) The assumed case of the possibility of a doctrine, in itself absurd and wicked, being attested by miracles, is entirely hypothetical. It is a case which cannot in the nature of things occur, and in regard to which, therefore, it is useless to reason. If, as has been already shown, a real miracle can be wrought by none but God, or by his appointment, as the supreme Governor of the world which he has made and preserves, it follows, that whenever a real miracle takes place, in attestation of any doctrine, that doctrine cannot be either unreasonable or impious; and if it should appear so to us, after the reality of the miracle is ascertained, our judgment must be erroneous. The miracle proves the doctrine, or the ground on which miracles are allowed to have any force of evidence at all, either supreme or subordinate, absolute or dependent, must be given up; for their evidence consists in this,—that they are the works of God. The working of a miracle is an immediate and conclusive proof that the claim to a divine commission of him by whom it is wrought is real, and that he himself should be received as the messenger of God.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### PRETENDED PAGAN MIRACLES—PRETENDED POPISH MIRACLES.

1. It seems strange that any one who is accustomed to contemplate the grandeur of nature, and philosophically to survey her operations, should cherish prejudices against miracles. What was creation but a miracle? The Deity, whose

agency is present in all his works, acts by his natural laws in the usual course of things, but by the special operation of a miracle whenever he pleases. When the manifestation of the superior Power, or the production of effects to which the common laws of things are inadequate, becomes expedient, then, what is specially needed, specially ensues. The divine agency immediately acts, and produces visible effects beyond the power of natural causes to occasion; and thus evidences its own operation. That it would not thus interfere without an adequate reason, is the deduction of our judgment, which Horace has so forcibly expressed; but that it will always thus interfere whenever a sufficient occasion makes its agency expedient, our same judgment will as correctly infer. Authentic history declares that it has thus interposed, but on rare, and always on great occasions, and from sufficient reasons; and thus the special interference of divine agency, in the occurrence of miracles on great occasions and from sufficient reasons, is the suggestion of our past experience, and is the true philosophical probability.\*

2. I repeat here what I have elsewhere stated, that the Bible, in the series of revelations which it contains, is the only religion that is or ever has been in the world, that laid claim on its first publication to the evidence of miracles. Paganism, or the numberless superstitions known by that common name, is out of the question. Mohammed disclaimed miracles, and owned that he had no commission or power to work them, being sent from God only as a prophet. Mr. Hume, indeed, with the view of vilifying the miracles of Scripture, advocates the pagan and popish miracles. For this purpose, he introduces to our notice Alexander of Pontus, the fortune-teller, who imposed on the credulity of barbarians by falling in with their superstitions: and Vespasian, who is reported by Tacitus to have cured a blind man in Alexandria, and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot. And these wonders, reputed to have been wrought by a strolling fortune-teller and a Roman emperor, are put in comparison with the miracles of the gospel! With the same view, he expatiates on the pretended miracles of the Romish church. But with respect to them all, I observe,—

3. First, They were wrought to support the dominant religion, and in the presence of those whose religious prejudices were to be flattered by them. Secondly, They were not

\* The Sacred History of the World, by S. Turner, vol. i. p. 72.

professedly wrought to prove anything: nor had they any connexion with any design of importance to mankind. Thirdly, Many of them are absurd, and all of them are wanting in evidence. They are not reported by any eye-witnesses of them, nor by any persons on whom they were wrought. Fourthly, They were not published till long after the time when they are said to have been performed. Fifthly, They were not first published in the place where they are said to have been wrought. And, sixthly, They were suffered to pass without examination, in the time when, and at the place where, they are said to have taken their rise.

4. When we come to examine the miracles of Scripture, we find that they were wrought in circumstances and for purposes totally different. They were closely connected with the system that pervades the whole of revelation, from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ; a system that was gradually developed, but the development of which, as well as its full accomplishment, was accompanied by miracles. It seems impossible for any candid man to view the several parts of this stupendous scheme, thus harmonizing and co-operating for the attainment of one specific object of the highest importance to the whole race of mankind, without being struck with the conviction of the absolute impossibility of imposture or enthusiasm in any part of the proceeding. We are compelled to acknowledge that they exhibit proofs of divine agency, carried on in one continued series; such as no other system has ever pretended to; such as not only surpasses all human ingenuity, but seems impossible to have been effected by any combination of created beings.\*

5. The miracles which were wrought in attestation of Christianity were performed, not in favour of a religion already dominant, but of one that was new, and which was altogether opposed to the deep-rooted prepossessions of those to whom it was addressed. And the triumph of this religion over all the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the world wielded for its destruction, can only be accounted for by admitting that the numerous miracles said to have been wrought by the Founder and first teachers of Christianity, were the works which none but God can perform.

\* Van Mildert's Boyle Lectures.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY.

THE other branch of the external evidence is prophecy, or the prediction of future events depending on the action of free agents. The teacher who tells us that he is commissioned by God, and acts under his direction, and who instantly performs a miracle in proof of the reality of his claim, must be received as a divine messenger. But it is obvious, that the same evidence would not be afforded by uttering a prediction in regard to some future event. The mere utterance of the prediction is no proof of the divine mission of the speaker apart from its fulfilment. Those only who witness its fulfilment have the evidence that its author was a prophet.

The completion of prophecy furnishes the most powerful evidence of the truth and divine authority of the revelation which it is designed to attest. For, if God alone can see the end from the beginning, so as to foreknow events which are future and contingent, it follows that he, who can foretell such events, must be under the inspiration of God. We shall find in the evidences by which divine revelation is attested, a system of prophecy which extends from the beginning to the end of time.



## BOOK IV.

### ON THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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#### CHAPTER I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE EVIDENCES OF DIVINE REVELATION—THE  
DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT—ON THE  
MIRACLES WHICH WERE WROUGHT IN ATTESTATION OF THE DIVINE  
LEGATION OF MOSES.

1. HAVING established the genuineness and authenticity of the Old Testament Scriptures, we shall now proceed to prove that they were written under the inspiration of God, and consequently are of divine authority. Here, as formerly, we shall direct our chief attention to the Pentateuch. The evidence by which its divine authority is attested is derived from the miracles and prophecies which accompanied the establishment and progress of the Mosaic Dispensation,—from the contents and general design of the record, and from certain circumstances of an auxiliary nature.

2. The Mosaic economy was founded on miraculous attestations. The reception of its doctrines and institutions was an acknowledgment that Moses was divinely commissioned; and the validity of his claims was proved by the miracles which he wrought from the day in which he appeared before the children of Israel in the character of the Messenger of Heaven until the day of his death. The ancient books, in which these mighty works are circumstantially recorded, give an account of supernatural events accomplished at the command of Moses in the presence of Pharaoh, and of the Israelites before they were released from captivity; of their miraculous transit through the Red sea to the wilderness,—of the miracles which attended the giving of the law,—of those which were wrought for their sustenance and preservation during forty years in the wilderness,—of the visible symbols of the presence of God which accompanied them all this period,—of the miraculous providence which put them in the possession of the land of Canaan, and which protected them in the observance of the institutions of the Mosaic dispensation nearly a thousand years.

3. When it is considered that the religion taught by Moses

existed from the earliest times,—that it was observed almost by a single people until the commencement of the Christian era,—that it is the only religious doctrine in the ancient world which will bear to be examined by the human understanding,—that it claimed from its commencement to its latest period the sanction of a positive revelation; and that this claim was sustained by what numerous and competent witnesses regarded as miraculous interpositions: this religion carries, in its first aspect, a pledge of its authority to which there is nothing similar or analogous in the history of all or of any of the ancient nations.

4. As the miracles wrought by our Lord were suited to the benevolent design of the Gospel dispensation, so those which were performed by Moses were peculiarly adapted to that economy which they were intended to establish. The Mosaic dispensation, compared with that of the Gospel, was severe, that it might attain its design in acting as our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. The miracles effected by our Saviour were in their nature benevolent, and in this respect accorded with the beneficent and sublime purpose of his appearance; but those accomplished by Moses were often characterised by severity, and were illustrative of the awful justice as well as mighty power of God.

5. My present object, however, is to prove the reality of those miracles by which the divine legation of Moses is attested, and by which the inspiration both of his writings and of those of the prophets is established. This will be fully evinced by the following considerations:—

6. (I.) It follows as a necessary consequence from the admission of the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch. These having been already proved, they must now be assumed. If the Pentateuch were really the production of Moses, and if therefore it were written at the time when Israel went out of Egypt and journeyed to Palestine, all the miracles which it records must be received as matters of fact.

7. For, if they really were performed as the record affirms, many thousands must have been eye-witnesses of them as well as Moses; and their testimony as to the occurrence of the facts is sufficient to authenticate them to us. But if no such miracles as those alleged were ever wrought, how could they possibly have been introduced into a narrative written at the time when they are said to have taken place? If we suppose the miracles

recorded to be fictions, we become bound to account for their insertion in the history, and especially for the zealous reception of that history by the contemporaneous Israelites, though every individual of at the least a million of adults must have been satisfied by the direct evidence of his or her senses, that the whole work was a tissue of impudent falsehoods. The admission of a supernatural interference *necessarily* follows the proof, that the Pentateuch was written in the days of Moses; nor can the admission be avoided, except by a demonstration that the Pentateuch was written long subsequent to that period. In short, on the supposition that no miracles were performed, while yet it is found impossible to ascribe the Pentateuch to any author save Moses himself, we may judge how immeasurable must have been the astonishment of the Israelites when they heard their lawgiver gravely address them in the following terms:—

8. “Know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel.—Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons and thy sons’ sons. Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children; and ye came near, and stood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness! And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice.—

Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth; and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard, and live? Or, hath God assayed to go, and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt *before your eyes*? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice. that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire, and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, we were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, and upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes; and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers.—Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness; and he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of a rock of flint, who fed thee in the wilderness with manna." \*

9. Is it possible that Moses could have thus recapitulated the miracles which were wrought in the presence of Israel during a long course of years, and have appealed to themselves as witnesses of their reality, if such events had not occurred? In this case, would the many thousands to whom the appeal

\* Deut. xi. 2—9; viii. 2—end.



had been made, have unanimously, and without hesitation, acknowledged that the miraculous works alluded to had actually taken place in their presence? "God forbid," say they, "that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; and which did those great signs in our sight; and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed." In short, if it be admitted that the Pentateuch was written in the days of Moses, and of this there is positive evidence, it must also of necessity be conceded, that both the Exodus and the whole journey of the Israelites were distinguished by a series of the most stupendous miracles.

10. Is it alleged by an unbeliever, that though the Pentateuch, as to its leading outlines, was written in the age of Moses, the account of the miracles may have been foisted in at a subsequent period? The cause of infidelity gains nothing by this allegation. For if we were to abstract from the books of Moses that part of the narrative which alludes to miraculous interpositions, the portion removed would indeed be very considerable. Besides, the miracles are recorded in the same spirit in which the whole is written, and with all the marks of the most perfect sincerity and truth. The writer conveys to the mind of the reader a decided impression of his honesty, of his zeal for the honour of God, and his concern for the moral and religious welfare of the people. We observe nothing like an attempt to conceal, no anticipation of objections, no fear of contradiction. The miracles are noticed as events with which the people were as familiar as the writer; and the exhortations which he addresses to them are often founded on the supernatural interpositions which they had witnessed in common. What man, however infatuated, would thus appeal to the personal knowledge of people regarding palpable facts, which they had not seen, and of which they had not heard, and which both he and they knew to have had no existence? Or, supposing such an appeal to have been made, what people would have given their unhesitating and unanimous acquiescence? Would they not rather have expressed their indignation at such effrontery and impiety? Would not the insult thus offered to their understandings have roused their displeasure, and have led them boldly to oppose what in such a case would have been impudent fabrications?

11. But the utter impossibility of inserting in the Pentateuch, at a period long subsequent to the age of Moses, an account of miracles alleged to have occurred in that age, is manifest from this, that the book which records the facts contains the law both civil and ecclesiastical of the people to whom it belongs. That law is closely interwoven with the miraculous character of their history: and it would be a superfluous task to prove, that the statute-book of any people can in no case be a forgery. If, for example, a person should forge a statute-book for England, and publish it next term, could he make all the judges, lawyers, and people believe that this was their genuine and only statute-book by which their causes had been determined for centuries past? The Pentateuch was the statute-book of the Jews; and it also contained the peculiar doctrines of their religious belief: it is impossible, therefore, that they should have allowed it to have been corrupted; and it is as impossible that it could have been corrupted without their knowledge. But I observe further,—

12. (II.) That the supernatural events recorded in the books of Moses possess all the characteristics of real miracles, and by which they are distinguished from imposture. Here it is proper that I should repeat the criteria of a miraculous interposition,—the criteria by which the matter of fact may be positively ascertained.

13. (I.) The alleged facts must be indubitably miraculous, and such as men's external senses may judge of. They must, either as to their matter or mode of performance, exclude every possible solution from natural causes, and manifestly require a creative power to accomplish them. Thus, to walk on the sea, to give sight to the blind, or to raise the dead, or instantaneously to change the waters of a whole kingdom into blood, are things which, as all will allow, demand the exercise of divine power.

14. (II.) The circumstances in which the alleged miracle is wrought, and by which it is attended, must be such as cannot possibly belong to delusion or imposture. A fact may be said to have been accomplished, which, in its nature or mode of performance, may be truly miraculous, and yet have been published to the world in such a way as to render its reality extremely doubtful. It is therefore required—First, that it be published to the world at the time when it is said to have been performed. Secondly, that it be extensively published in

the place where it has been wrought. Thirdly, that the circumstances in which it is wrought and published are such as ought to satisfy every reasonable mind, that it underwent a careful examination, and that from its very nature, as a sensible fact, capable of being judged of by the external senses, it must have been detected had it been an imposture.

15. These criteria, it will be found on the most rigid examination, strictly apply to the miracles which were wrought by Moses in attestation of his divine commission. The facts alleged were, as to their nature and mode of accomplishment, unquestionably supernatural. Nor can it be denied by even those who, contrary to the clearest evidence, allege that they may have been spurious, that they "were nevertheless of such an extraordinary description, that they alike imposed on the Israelites who sighed for freedom, and upon the Egyptians who angrily and obstinately withheld it from them. By some means or other he contrived to persuade both friends and foes, both those who might wish to believe, and those who wanted neither will nor power to detect the imposture, that the appearances which he exhibited were real miracles."

16. Moses and Aaron are thus represented as asserting their commission, and expressing their demand in the presence of Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness." The despotic monarch, unaccustomed to be addressed in such peremptory terms, frowns on the messengers of Heaven, and considers their demand as insulting. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." After this refusal, a series of miracles is wrought, the first three of which, namely, the transmutation of Aaron's rod into a serpent, the changing of the river into blood, and the bringing up of the frogs, were imitated by the magicians or sorcerers of Egypt. When they attempted, or pretended to attempt, the performance of the fourth, they confessed their inability, and said unto Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God."

17. The magicians were a numerous order of men in eastern countries, who resembled in many respects the Druids of Britain, and who, like them, had an extensive influence over the people. In some places they were invested with civil power to a considerable extent; and, probably, in no situation were they destitute of the countenance of government. It is not surprising

that in such circumstances, and with such advantages, they should have pretended to the performance of extraordinary works.

18. There is nothing in the three instances in which the magicians are represented to have imitated the miracles of Moses, which might not, in their circumstances, have been effected without supernatural aid. Skilled as they were in the science of Egypt, it was surely quite possible for them to have imposed, in the cases alluded to, on a people predisposed to support their influence and authority. This opinion appears still more probable from the circumstance, that though they succeeded in making Pharaoh and his courtiers believe that they had wrought three miracles in imitation of Moses, they were obliged to own that they had not power to counteract the influence of the plagues which they pretended to imitate. They could not change the Nile from its bloody state into water; nor could they destroy the frogs which had covered the whole land: the messengers of Heaven, who by a word had inflicted these plagues, were alone capable of removing them. Here the deceptions of the enchanters ceased; and they themselves acknowledged a divine interposition in the works which were performed by Moses and Aaron. "The magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: but Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them."

19. Without expatiating on each of the miracles wrought by Moses in Egypt, for the purpose of showing that each bears the marks characteristic of a divine interposition, it may be briefly observed, that they were regarded in this light, as was proved by the result, both by the Egyptians and the Israelites. That Pharaoh, much against his will, was forced to yield to the demands of the Jewish legislator in regard to the departure of Israel, is undeniable. Nor can there be a doubt, that the reason assigned in the history for this reluctant consent was the true one. In his last interview with the king, he is represented as denouncing a fearful judgment,—the death of the firstborn over all the land of Egypt; from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth on his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of beasts. He declared, that in case of Pharaoh's persisting in his refusal, this desolating calamity would be inflicted at the approaching midnight. If this prediction had not been verified, would not Pharaoh, in place of granting his consent



to the departure of Israel, have punished the denunciator as an impostor? But this consent was given. It is absolutely certain, therefore, that the prophecy was fulfilled, and that a stupendous miracle was wrought. "Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, and serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men."

20. Soon after Israel had departed out of Egypt, another signal miracle was wrought for their deliverance. They formed an unwieldy host as they left the land of their bondage, consisting of about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children; a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. The history informs us, that from their departure they were attended by the visible symbols of the presence of God, in the pillar of cloud, and in the pillar of fire, that went before them. When they came to the border of the Red sea, they found themselves in a situation from which it was impossible by ordinary means to escape. The pursuing army of the Egyptians, conducted by Pharaoh, was in their rear; the Red sea on the one hand, and the Arabian mountains on the other, with an inlet of considerable breadth out of the sea in front. At night, the pillar of cloud, which had hitherto gone before the Israelites, went between them and the Egyptians; while the pillar of fire went before them. The intervening cloud effectually concealed by its darkness the Israelitish host from their pursuers. While in this situation, the Lord said unto Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." In obedience to the command of Heaven, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; "and the Lord caused the sea to go back, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses,

his chariots, and his horsemen.—And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. Moses having done as he was commanded, the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, that came into the sea after them ; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea ; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.”\*

21. Such is the miraculous interposition by which the sacred history accounts for the escape of Israel, and the destruction of the Egyptian host. In confirmation of its truth all the individuals of the two millions of Israelites who were present on the occasion most firmly believed in the miraculous character of their deliverance. For they are all represented as uniting with Moses in celebrating this wonderful work, and saying : “The horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them ; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.” There is here the recorded testimony of two millions of persons, to the reality of a work truly miraculous, performed for their salvation from impending ruin, as well as for the destruction of their enemies. There was no possibility of deception. Every individual of this immense host must have known perfectly whether he had, or had not, crossed the channel of the sea. Each individual, according to the statement of the record, declares he did pass in safety in the manner described.

22. That the people of Israel did pass by some means is very certain ; “for otherwise the Israelites must have been destroyed by the incensed Egyptians, and could never have escaped into the wilderness of Horeb. How then is the difficulty to be solved if we deny the miracle ? Admit only the miracle, and everything is easy and consistent. The very form of the ground had thrown the Israelites into a long line. When they faced therefore to the left, and when the sea opened for the whole extent of their company ; by marching in rank, they would require no very great space of time to cross it : whereas, if they had marched in file through a narrow aperture of the sea, an armament of two millions, with their baggage and cattle,

\* Exod. xiv. 19—23.

must have needed many days for their transit.—But the wonder is, how the Egyptians could have been so mad as to follow them. They seem, for a time at least, not to have been conscious whither they were going. The transit was accomplished in the night; and while the miraculous pillar of fire gave light to the Israelites, the cloud which accompanied it, spreading as a curtain over the rear of the fugitives, tenfold increased the horrors of darkness to the Egyptians. As the morning began to break, they found at length where they were, even upon the slimy bottom of the deep; and they forthwith sought to effect their retreat; but it was now too late; the rod of Moses was again extended over the channel from the eastern shore; and they were instantly overwhelmed by the returning waters.”\*

23. After this miraculous interposition, the Israelitish host directed their course through the wilderness of Horeb; in which they continued to sojourn during a period of forty years. The admission of this undeniable fact requires the admission of a miraculous interposition during the whole of that time. How, otherwise, amid surrounding barrenness and desolation, could so great a multitude be supported? Food must have been provided for their sustenance; and how was this food procured? Could it possibly be obtained but by a supernatural agency? The people were sufficiently disposed to complain of the hardship to which they were necessarily liable in the inhospitable regions which they traversed; and can we imagine that they would have quietly submitted to a deception in regard to their daily bread? There were those in the camp who envied Moses, who were jealous of his authority, and who wanted neither inclination nor power to have detected and exposed such imposture, had it been possible. When the Israelites took up stones to kill Moses, because they had not water to drink, could they have allowed themselves to believe that their thirst was allayed by water from the rock, unless this had actually been the case? Would they have given their silent acquiescence to the statement, of their having eaten food from heaven, if no such food had existed? But this reasoning is superfluous; since the fact, that the Israelitish host, consisting of two millions of souls, did pass through the wilderness, necessarily includes the additional fact, that they were provided in their journey by a supernatural agency.

\* Faber's *Horeæ Mosaicæ*, vol. i. p. 378.

24. I shall not make any lengthened remarks on the miracles which accompanied the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. Three days before they happened, Moses told the children of Israel that they should take place; and commanded them to be ready against the predicted period to view with reverence the extraordinary manifestation of the presence of the Deity. "It came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount.—And the people said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

25. Thus does it appear, that the Mosaic economy was founded by miracles; and that the history of the establishment of that dispensation is so interwoven with these supernatural interpositions, that they stand or fall together. It is not more certain that the Pentateuch was written in the age of Moses, than it is clear that the miracles recorded in that history were wrought by that legislator. The evidence also by which they are proved to have been miraculous interpositions, rises in strength to moral certainty. But as no man can perform those wonderful works, unless God be with him, it follows that Moses received his commission from God, and, consequently, that the whole system which he was authorized to reveal is of divine authority.

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## CHAPTER II.

ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE WITNESSES, AND THE NATURE OF THE TESTIMONY ADDUCED IN ATTESTATION OF THE MIRACLES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

1. HAVING considered the genuineness of the miracles which were wrought to prove the divine authority of Moses and of



the Mosaic institutions, the question here occurs,—Is the testimony by which they are authenticated, both as viewed in itself and as transmitted to us, such as to warrant our belief in their having really occurred? The question is general; and is proposed with as much propriety in reference to the miracles recorded in the New Testament, as to those which are reported in the Old. Though we admit that in both cases the eye-witnesses of those wonderful works justly considered them as a sufficient attestation of a divine commission, it may be proper for us to inquire, whether we are entitled, from the nature of the testimony by which they are conveyed to us, to come to the same conclusion.

2. It has been already shown that the miracles which were performed by Moses had all the marks characteristic of miraculous interpositions. In order to authenticate a miracle by testimony, it is required that the witnesses should have the fullest opportunities of ascertaining by the evidence of their external senses the reality of the extraordinary facts which it is their object to attest. Their circumstances must be such as to render their being deceived a moral impossibility. It is required that the miracles which they certify should have been wrought in situations which attracted the notice of the uncandid and prejudiced: in situations where, if those who are specially authorized to bear testimony are deceived, every individual of the multitude present, however anxious to detect and expose imposture, must be completely under the influence of the same deception: and this too after they have strictly examined the facts submitted to their investigation.

3. It is further requisite that the circumstances be such as to exclude every motive to imposture. It must appear that neither the desire of fame, of honour, or of riches, influenced the witnesses in their testimony;—that they were actuated by a full conviction of the truth, and not of the truth only, but of the notoriety of the events which they relate; that it was impossible for them to obtain credit in the first instance, except on the admission of their veracity; that they gave such proofs of their veracity as clearly showed that they acted, in bearing their testimony, under the supernatural direction of the God of truth;—and that the truth of their testimony involved consequences of the deepest importance to the interests of the human race.

4. The credibility of the testimony is greatly strengthened

when the witnesses are numerous; and when adherence to their testimony involves great sacrifices. If persecution, poverty, and death be the consequences, and if, in defiance of all these, the witnesses continue firm and uniform in their declarations to the last, have we not the strongest evidence for the reality of the facts attested, that the case will admit of, especially if there exist memorials which commenced with the alleged facts?

With these considerations in view, let us proceed to consider the character and opportunities of the witnesses by whose testimony the miracles of the Mosaic economy are authenticated. I begin with Moses himself; and shall adduce evidence in proof of his having been neither an enthusiast, a dupe, nor an impostor.

5. The Jewish legislator, in consequence of the circumstances in which, during infancy, he was exposed on the waters of the Nile, was early introduced to the notice and compassion of the princess, by whom he was educated as her own son. Whatever may have been the nature of the science and literature of Egypt, we know that they were greatly celebrated among the nations of antiquity. In all the wisdom of the Egyptians, we are informed, that Moses was learned. But this knowledge of philosophy could have no tendency to produce enthusiasm. On the contrary, it would be highly calculated to preserve from that infirmity of human nature, even if there had existed a constitutional bias towards it. When we add to this the circumstances in which Moses was trained,—amid the refinement and publicity of a splendid court, and of those various engagements which occupy and amuse the mind, there surely was a very strong probability against his becoming an enthusiast.

6. It is true, he lived forty years in exile and retirement; and it may be alleged, that in the recesses of the wilderness, in circumstances so different from those to which he had been accustomed, a strong imagination might gradually produce the reveries of enthusiasm. Has it not been universally remarked, that a wild and mountainous country, which presents but a limited variety of objects, and these only of a description suited to awaken to solemn thought, has a powerful tendency to engender this frame of mind? It often happens in such a situation that the mind partially loses its command over the trains of its ideas, and the dreams of imagination

operate as realities. Had the solitary regions in which Moses for so long a time was placed this effect upon him?

7. We cannot determine, indeed, what were his musings during all this period: but we are informed by himself that he lived in the bosom of a pretty numerous family; and we cannot doubt that his learned education would enable him to fill up his vacant hours in a manner agreeable to himself, and useful to the little community of which he was a member. When called to undertake the office of delivering Israel, his conduct was the reverse of an enthusiast; who sees no dangers, and who does not expect disappointment; who, under the impulse created by a heated imagination, eagerly rushes forward to the execution of his projects, assured of complete and final success. But Moses showed a degree of reluctance not unnatural to a man who took a sober view of the difficulties connected with the measure proposed. After one objection is overruled, he starts another, and another, till at length he candidly owns that he had no liking to the work. "Who am I," he asks, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?—When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?—Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.—O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.—O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." Would an enthusiast offer objections in this manner, or show such unwillingness to undertake the proposed office?

8. But his success, when he did undertake it, sufficiently proves that he was not influenced by mere enthusiasm. He demanded from Pharaoh, in the name of the Lord God of Israel, the liberation of his people: And the fact is indisputable, that, notwithstanding the reluctance of that monarch to comply with a claim urged in the most peremptory terms, the means employed by Moses at length extorted his consent. He might have been a mere enthusiast, and yet have made this demand; but in that case he would have failed of success: On the other hand, if it had been presented by a messenger from heaven, the end sought after would have certainly been attained.

But by the testimony of heathen writers, we are assured that Moses safely conducted the Israelites out of Egypt. Therefore Moses could not have been a mere enthusiast, whatever may have been the mode in which he accomplished his purpose.

9. Our conviction of the truth of this conclusion will be strengthened by considering the nature of that system of religion and morality which he taught. A cursory survey of the Pentateuch is sufficient to show that the laws and institutions, the doctrines and precepts, established by Moses, are not only incomparably superior to those of all the nations of antiquity, but worthy of the wisdom and goodness of God. The grand purpose for which they were designed, they were admirably calculated to effect, namely, to maintain the knowledge and the worship of the only living and true God, and the separation of Israel from the heathen world.

10. Thus does it clearly appear that Moses was not a mere enthusiast, and that he did not act under the influence of self-deception. But the evidence by which this is so very fully established does not close here. For, on the supposition that Moses was deceived himself, we must account for the manner in which he succeeded in deceiving the mighty host whom he triumphantly conducted out of the land of oppression. Galling as they felt their bondage to be, they had no predisposition to trust to any enthusiast or impostor who might proffer deliverance. "Behold," says Moses, "they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." When he presented himself unto them, as their divinely-commissioned prophet, we find that his opinion in regard to their incredulity was fully verified. For they received him not as the messenger of Heaven, until he proved his commission by the evidence of miracles, namely, the transmutation of the rod in his hand, and the changing the river-water into blood. It was then only that the people believed, and, in adoration and gratitude to the God of their fathers, bowed their heads and worshipped.

11. Now, it is certain, that they must either have seen the alleged miracles performed, or have been made to believe that they had seen them. If the former be admitted, it must also be conceded that Moses was a true prophet. In this case it would be unnecessary to proceed farther with our investigation. But if it be maintained that the people were induced by illusive appearances to fancy that they had beheld the miracles, it



must also be held that Moses was an impostor, who succeeded by the sleight-of-hand wonders which he wrought to deceive the inhabitants of Egypt, both learned and illiterate, as well as the Hebrews. Egypt, which at that period surpassed all other nations in science and literature, and from which the ancient nations derived much of their knowledge, contained many individuals possessed of science and talent, who were capable of detecting the most artful imposture. Yet, they acquiesced in the reality of those awful visitations which were inflicted by Moses,—the supernatural darkness which continued three days, and the instantaneous death of the first-born over all the land.

12. That Moses had no intention of deceiving others, and, consequently, that he was no impostor, is proved by the most abundant evidence. It is established by the whole of his conduct; for, if we exclude the idea of a divine interposition, it is impossible, on any rational principles, to account for his conduct.

13. The circumstances in which he was educated, in connexion with a splendid court, and with all the advantages of the most skilful teachers, might be calculated to foster ambitious views. Had he been actuated by worldly wisdom, and resolved to improve, to the aggrandisement of himself, the fortunate situation into which he had been cast, his principles and conduct would have been very different from what we know them to have been. Familiar as he was with the promises that had been made to his pious ancestors respecting the Great Deliverer who should arise for the salvation of his people, he gave credit to them; and he felt assured that, enslaved as the house of Israel then was, it was under the care of that special Providence which should, in due time, interpose on its behalf. Though at that period of life when a glowing imagination gives a brilliant colouring to all the objects of earthly desire; and though all around him had a tendency to impress him with the feeling, that if these objects did not solely constitute happiness, their attainment was at least necessary to its enjoyment; he voluntarily relinquished all the worldly advantages arising out of his situation. "By faith," we are informed by the apostle Paul, "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming

the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." What were the objects for which he made this mighty sacrifice? They were not such as could stimulate or gratify earthly ambition; they were not such as any sober-minded man, acting merely on prudential and worldly circumstances would regard; for, in so far as this life is concerned, they could afford him no visible compensation.

14. Actuated by such views, he was so far from dreading the reproach of being allied by birth to the oppressed Israelites, that he became their vindicator. Their degraded condition was, indeed, unlike the greatness of the promises which they fondly cherished; nor was it surprising that their oppressors should have made them the objects of derision. It was this reproach that Moses preferred to all the wealth and glory of Egypt; and in doing so, whatever opinion may be formed of his wisdom, his conduct was completely the reverse of that of an impostor. He had as yet, most evidently, formed no scheme of imposture; and the principles of piety and of generosity by which he was actuated, rendered it very improbable that he should digest or execute such a plan at any future period. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."

15. He retired into the recesses of the wilderness, and formed a matrimonial alliance far from favourable to ambitious designs. Here, in the bosom of his family, and tending his flock, he passed forty years,—a considerable period of his life,—and a period which would certainly not have been passed in inglorious repose had he been actuated by the views and feelings of an impostor. What hope of success could he entertain, on the supposition that such had been his views and feelings, at the time which he selected for the experiment? It was impossible he could attain his object by violence. Nor could it be accomplished by intrigue. In what other way could the most sagacious politician think of compassing it?

16. But in neither of these ways did Moses liberate the enslaved Hebrews. After he had opened his commission to the elders of the people, he proceeded, accompanied by Aaron, his brother, into the presence of the king, and in unceremonious and peremptory language made a demand, the very making of which, he might be well assured, was attended with hazard. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that

they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." "It is not surprising that a petition which indicated in those by whom it was presented, judging on any mere human principles of action, the height of imprudence, should have been scornfully rejected by a despotic monarch. But notwithstanding the scorn and indignation with which he treated the petition and the petitioners, we know that the matter finally terminated in favour of both; and that the king, much against his inclination, was forced to give his consent to the departure of Israel.

17. How can this fact, the occurrence of which is universally acknowledged, be accounted for, on the supposition of Moses being an impostor? If a divine interposition be admitted, a sufficient explanation is given of the event; if not, on what human principles can a solution be given? The fact, that Israel did leave Egypt is unquestionable; for it is attested by many heathen authors, and there is no opposing testimony. "According to Manetho, Lysimachus, Diodorus, Justin, and some of the authors consulted by Tacitus, the Israelites were violently expelled; but according to other authors adduced by Tacitus, they were not expelled, but merely emigrated; and the reason assigned for their voluntary emigration is simply that the vast population of Egypt exceeded its resources." They all agree as to the fact, though they differ from the Pentateuch as to the cause of its occurrence. "When opposed, as in respect to this they are, to the narrative of Moses, which they all more or less incidentally corroborate, what reliance can be placed on writers who thus perpetually contradict themselves, who had a motive to falsify the truth, and of whom the very earliest (Manetho) flourished more than twelve centuries after the event?" The cause assigned by Moses, the miraculous interposition of God, is that only which accounts for the fact. But this cause being admitted, it must also be conceded that Moses acted as the delegate of Heaven, and that he was a true prophet.

18. After Israel were liberated from Egypt, they were conducted by Moses through the Red Sea, while all the Egyptian hosts perished by the return of the waters. They were afterwards led by him into the wilderness, where they must have inevitably perished, had their leader been an impostor. That they followed him as a leader from heaven, is attested by Tacitus and other heathen historians. But would they have continued to regard him as sustaining a miraculous character,

unless in their difficulties he had afforded them miraculous assistance? Could they have believed that they were sustained by manna from heaven, that they drunk water which flowed to them from a rock, and that they had seen the earth opening and destroying their enemies, if these things had not happened? Their belief in their occurrence furnishes complete proof of their reality; but the admission of their reality is the establishment of the divine legation of Moses.

19. It would be improper to conclude this subject without adverting to the moral and religious character of Moses, as furnishing an argument in support of the validity of his claims.

20. We have ample evidence of his sincerity in the manner in which, as an historian, he has written his narrative. This is characterised by the marks of the most perfect candour, impartiality, and veracity. I shall at present make no further allusion to the character of his narrative than to say, that after an extended comparison of the history written by Moses, and that of Josephus, regarding the same events, we clearly perceive the difference between the genuine narration of the one, and the cautious compilation of the other. "We find Josephus," to use the words of an excellent writer\* on the last four books of the Pentateuch, "doing what is natural every compiler of a history should do, when describing the character of a legislator whom he looked up to with reverence, and when detailing the conduct of his countrymen, whom he wished to place in the best light; we find him magnifying the talents and virtues of the one, and palliating and excusing the murmurs and idolatries, the obstinacy and crimes, of the other. Now, what I contend for is this, that if the Pentateuch had been compiled by any historian, guided by the mere uncontrolled feelings and partialities of the human mind, we should discover them in his describing the character of the man who is represented as the legislator and head of the nation who were the chosen people of God. I could show, by a minute induction, that nothing of this kind occurs in the Pentateuch, and that multiplied instances of it are found in Josephus, who is yet admitted to be an historian of general veracity and integrity. But I forbear: I trust I have said enough to prove that the Pentateuch is written with such strict impartiality, as enables us to rely on the truth of its relation even in the most minute particulars."

\* Graves's Lect. vol. i. p. 63.



21. We observe in Moses zeal for the honour of God, and an habitual and generous concern for the comfort and welfare of the people under his charge. His disinterestedness is remarkable. Though invested with supreme authority, and though, from the prophetic character which he sustained, his influence was great, he in no instance shows a desire to perpetuate the wealth and power of his family. He did not assume to himself the title of king, nor did he attempt to confine the sovereign authority to the line of his sons, or even of his tribe. His descendants are excluded both from the priesthood and from the civil direction of the nation: instead of being ranked with the chiefs or heads of families, they are placed on a level with the ordinary members of the tribe. Near the close of his life he nominated, for his successor in the supreme military and civil command, Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim. This disinterested conduct is unaccountable, unless we admit that Moses was influenced by principles very different from those which must always actuate impostors; and that he was truly what he claimed to be, the inspired and divinely-commissioned servant of the God of Israel.

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### CHAPTER III.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION FURTHER PROVED—THE CREDIBILITY OF THE TESTIMONY TO THE MIRACLES.

1. (I.) IN the last chapter I considered the character and opportunities of the witnesses by whose testimony the miracles of the Mosaic economy are attested. I began with Moses himself, and adduced evidence to prove that he was neither an enthusiast, a dupe, nor an impostor. I now go on,

2. (II.) To the proof arising from the marks of sincerity and truth with which the miracles are recorded. They are related not only by a person of good character and eminent moral worth, but the record exhibits all the evidence of perfect sincerity and veracity; that sincerity, the expression of which every man feels, and which carries conviction to the mind more forcibly than the most elaborate argument. In the writings of Moses we discover no indication of a wish to conceal, or any fear of contradiction; but the most unhesitating assurance of truth, mingled with unpretending modesty, and undesigned simplicity. There is no endeavour to produce effect, no ten-

dency to diminish or exaggerate, to raise the reputation of the writer, or to seize the imagination of the reader. There is no anticipation of objections. As was formerly observed, there is minute attention to the circumstances of time, place, and persons.

3. There is shown throughout zeal for the honour of God, anxiety for the welfare of the people, a constant recognition of the overruling and superintending providence of God, and a sense of his great goodness in the deliverance which he had wrought. The events which Moses relates are recorded in terms expressive of their indisputable reality, and are generally made the foundation of the discourses which he addresses to the people. He speaks of them as known and acknowledged, and appeals to all Israel as witnesses of their truth. Nor does he ever attempt to conciliate the favour of those to whose knowledge he thus appeals, by extolling their own virtues or those of their ancestors. On the contrary, he exposes and reproves their vices with just severity. What motive could lead him to exercise such impartiality and fidelity, if he had not been influenced, in every part of his conduct, by a conscientious regard to truth? Is not national pride natural to man, and do not all wish to maintain the honour of their forefathers? What, then, could have induced the Jewish legislator to expose so fully, and censure so severely, the vices of the people whom he loved, and in whose character, it might be supposed, his own reputation was involved? He had powerful temptations to conceal or extenuate their faults; yet he relates them with candour and simplicity.

4. The same scrupulous veracity is observable in his relation of the facts regarding himself. He altogether omits what was calculated to gratify vanity, such as his personal qualities, his early education, the learning which he acquired, and the splendour of his situation at the court of Pharaoh. But his own infirmities, and those of the members of his family, are recorded, as well as the evils which these brought upon him and them. Now, I affirm, that there is no principle in human nature to account for such conduct, unless we admit the entire sincerity and perfect veracity of Moses; and if these be acknowledged, the truth of his testimony regarding all the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch is established. Was it possible that stronger proof could have been given of the sincerity of any human being respecting the facts which he declares to

have happened? Who would have acted as Moses has done, unless he knew the truth of the facts, and the acknowledgment of them by those whom he addressed? This leads me to observe,

5. (III.) That the miracles recorded in the Mosaic narrative are farther proved by the acknowledgment and conduct of the nation before whom they were wrought. This particular has been already repeatedly alluded to, and I shall now very briefly advert to it. By Moses appealing to the people for the truth of the miracles, and thus exposing himself to detection, if what he had asserted was false, his testimony must be regarded as that of all Israel. Such an appeal shows not only his own full belief, but implies the attestation of the whole people; and an acknowledgment that they personally knew the reality of the facts which were set forth. This appeal is made to them sometimes in direct terms; often in the way of inference and allusion; not infrequently in the form of recital; occasionally it is implied in the laws which he delivers to them; and more than once it is implied in the language of praise and thanksgiving.

6. Thus, we are authorized to consider all Israel as bearing testimony to the truth of the facts, from their full acquiescence in the statements of Moses, from their respect for him during his life, their reverence for his memory after his death, and from their obedience to his laws on the ground of the truth of the facts. How could all this be possible, and especially, how could he have continued to be the object of their veneration, on the supposition that he had insulted them by appealing to facts which they knew had never taken place? But we know that this veneration was cherished towards him from the earliest to the latest period of the Jewish history; that they regarded him as the servant of God, and as acting under his immediate direction: and that it was in consequence of the admission of the reality of all the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch, they received and submitted to the laws and rites which he prescribed. These laws they transmitted to their children, accompanied with their testimony to the works of miraculous power, of which they were the witnesses: and burdensome and expensive as some of the Mosaic institutions were, they were, in virtue of this evidence, at first embraced, and preserved with veneration by the Israelites.

7. It cannot be alleged with any appearance of truth, that

the ancient Israelites, though sincere in giving their testimony to the reality of the miracles, may have been deceived; for delusion in their case, in regard to the great facts of their history, was impossible. Could they have been brought to believe that they had witnessed the dividing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian host in consequence of its return, if no such events had ever taken place? Could they have been deluded so as to have imagined that during a number of years they were miraculously fed by food from heaven, if no such food had ever existed? "For a man to imagine," to use the words of Mr. Hume, "that he sees what hath no reality, to impose in this manner not only on his own understanding, but even on his external senses, is a pitch of delusion higher than the highest enthusiasm can produce, and is to be imputed to downright phrensy."

8. (IV.) The reality of the miracles of the Mosaic dispensation is farther proved by the traditions and testimony of heathen antiquity. Various learned writers have fully shown that the general traditions transmitted from early times, and existing in every quarter of the globe, correspond in their principal features with the facts related in the Mosaic record. These traditions being found among nations with whom the Jews had no intercourse, this striking resemblance can only be accounted for on the supposition that both sprung from one common source, that they were separated, and migrated into different parts of the world.

9. The tradition of many heathen nations, the Chaldean, Egyptian, Phenician, Hindoo, Chinese, Etruscan, Grecian, and American, respecting the production of the world from chaos, bears so remarkable a resemblance to the account of the creation in the Mosaic record, as proves that they originated from one common source; while the striking contrast between the unadorned simplicity of the one, and the allegorical turgidity of the other, accurately distinguishes the inspired narrative from the distorted tradition.

10. There are also traditions of the happy condition of man in a state of innocence, when, according to the Mosaic record, he was placed by his Maker in paradise. Hence the notion, prevalent in all heathen nations, of the primeval purity and felicity of man. Hesiod, who lived near a thousand years before Christ, says, that immediately after the birth of man, the golden age commenced. Mankind then led the life of the



gods, free from tormenting cares, and exempt from labour and sorrows. Old age was unknown; their limbs were braced with perpetual vigour; and the evils of disease were unfelt. Every blessing was theirs; the fruits of the earth sprang up spontaneously and abundantly; Peace reigned, and her companions were happiness and pleasure. Maurice, in his history of Hindostan, observes, there can arise little doubt, but that by the Satya age, or age of perfection, the Brahmins obscurely allude to the state of perfection and happiness enjoyed by man in paradise. It is impossible to explain what the Indian writers assert, concerning the universal purity of manners, and the luxurious and unbounded plenty prevailing in that primitive era, without this supposition. Justice, truth, philanthropy, were then practised among all the orders and classes of mankind. —Every tongue uttered praises, and every heart glowed with gratitude to the Supreme Creator.—The gods, in token of their approbation of the conduct of mankind, condescended to hold personal converse with the yet undepraved race of mortals. We may also discover in the classical story of the garden of the Hesperides, an evident tradition of the Mosaical paradise. Nor is the conjecture without probability, that from the holiness of the garden of Eden the pagans borrowed the ancient custom of consecrating groves to the worship of their various deities.

11. Nor should we fail to remark, as a collateral confirmation of the Mosaic history of the creation, the general adoption of the division of time into weeks, and the peculiar observance of the seventh day, which has prevailed among so many ancient and modern nations, Hebrews, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Goths, Chinese, and Hindoos. How can such division be accounted for on arbitrary principles? For while the periodical divisions of years, months, and days, arise from such natural causes as are universally obvious, the annual and diurnal revolutions of the sun, and the revolution of the moon, the division of time into weeks seems perfectly arbitrary: and its prevailing, therefore, in distant countries, and among nations which had no communication with one another, affords a strong presumption that it must have been derived from the Mosaic account of the creation, the tradition of which has been older than the dispersion of mankind into different regions. It is easy to conceive, that the practice in rude and barbarous ages might remain through habit, when the tradition on which it was founded was entirely lost; it is easy to conceive that after-

wards people addicted to idolatry, or who, like the Egyptians, had become proficient in astronomy, should assign to the different days of the week the names of their deities or of their planets.

12. It is therefore probable, that these ancients owed the doctrine of the creation of all things to a tradition handed down from the earliest ages, which even all the absurdities of the theology they had embraced had not been able totally to erase, though these absurdities could never be made to coalesce with this doctrine. That this opinion is not the offspring of philosophy, may be reasonably deduced from this consideration, that they were not the most enlightened or philosophic nations amongst whom it was maintained in greatest purity. I speak not of the Hebrews. Even the Parthians, Medes, and Persians, whom the Greeks considered as barbarians, were genuine theists; and, notwithstanding many superstitious practices which prevailed among them, they held the belief of one eternal God, the Creator and the Lord of the universe. If this principle is to be derived from the utmost improvement of the mind in ratiocination and science, which is Mr. Hume's hypothesis, the phenomenon just now observed is unaccountable. If, on the contrary, it is to be derived originally from revelation, preserved by tradition through successive generations, nothing can more easily be accounted for. Traditions are always longest retained, and most purely transmitted, in or near the place where they were first received, and amongst a people who possess strong attachment to their ancient laws and customs. Migrations into distant countries, mixture of different nations, revolutions in government and manners, yea and ingenuity itself, all contribute to corrupt tradition, and do sometimes wholly efface it. This I take to be the only admissible account, why so rational and so philosophical a principle prevailed most in ages and countries in which reason and philosophy seemed to be but in their infancy. The notion that the Greeks borrowed their opinions on this subject from the books of Moses, a notion for which some Jewish writers, some Christian fathers, and even some moderns have warmly contended, appears void of all foundation. These opinions in Greece were of a very early date; whereas, that there existed such a people as the Jews seems scarcely to have been known there till about the time of the Macedonian conquests. No sooner were they known than

they were hated, and their laws and customs universally despised. Nor is there the shadow of reason to think that the Greeks knew anything of the sacred writings till a considerable time afterwards, when that version of them was made into their language, which is called the translation of the Seventy. After a brief description of man's primeval innocence and happiness, the book of Genesis mentions his fall and the introduction of sin into the world. The depravity which both Scripture and experience unite in showing to have tainted human nature, is ascribed by Moses to the disobedience of our first parents. They were tempted to this violation of the command of God by an evil spirit, who addressed them through the organs of a serpent. The penalty of their transgression was death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof," said the Lord to Adam, "thou shalt surely die."

13. Traditions of this event, more or less agreeable to the Mosaic account, have been preserved by pagan nations. The classical mythologists represent mankind as gradually corrupted during the period subsequent to the golden age. The second race, says Hesiod, degenerated extremely from the virtues of the first. They were men of violence and rapine: they had no pleasure in worshipping the immortals. Nor can it be doubted that the introduction of evil into the world by the disobedience of Eve is plainly alluded to in the well-known legend of Pandora, who being led by a fatal curiosity to open a casket that had been given her by Jupiter, out of which flew all those evils which have ever since afflicted mankind, Hope alone, the hope, as has been beautifully observed, in a promised deliverer, remained at the bottom of the casket.

14. Accordingly we find that the corruption of human nature, in consequence of the fall of man from a state of primeval purity, has been alluded to by several of the ancient heathen moralists, philosophers, and poets. The Stoics and Platonics, in particular, complain of the depraved condition of mankind,—of their proneness to what is evil, and their aversion to what is good. The cause of our wickedness, according to Plato, is derived from our parents and from the constitution of our nature, rather than from ourselves, so that we never relinquish those actions by which we imitate the primitive fault of our earliest ancestors. This evil, says Hierocles, men have brought upon themselves by their voluntary apostasy from God, and by their withdrawing themselves from that communion

with him which they once, in a pure light, enjoyed. The reality of such a mental alienation from the Supreme Being is proved by our strong tendency towards the earth; and our sole deliverance from this state of spiritual degradation is our return unto him. We are born, says Seneca, in such a condition, that we are not subject to fewer disorders of the mind than of the body: all vices are in all men, though they do not break out in every one.

15. There is no fact mentioned in the Pentateuch which has received more full and universal testimony from the traditions and opinions of mankind than expiatory sacrifice, an institution which appears to have been of divine appointment, and designed to prefigure the nobler oblation which was afterwards to be offered on Calvary. This rite has been practised in every quarter of the globe, and by almost every nation, whether barbarous or civilized. The inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, the rude idolaters of the recently discovered hemisphere, and the polished votaries of ancient polytheism, equally concur in the belief, that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. So deep was the impression of guilt, that the sacrifice of human victims appears to have been general. The priesthood of Britain, as well as of India, pronounced, that unless the pollution of our guilty race was washed away in the blood of man, the wrath of Heaven could not be averted. With this view the Canaanites caused their firstborn to pass through the fire. The fatal blow being struck, the lifeless human bodies were consumed in the sacred fire, which was kept perpetually burning; while the blood, in singular conformity with the Levitical ordinances, was sprinkled, partly upon the surrounding multitude, partly upon the trees of the hallowed grove, and partly upon the images of their idols.

16. "Whence then, we may ask," says Mr. Faber, "could originate this universal practice of devoting the firstborn, either of man or beast, and of offering it up as a burnt-offering? Whence but from a deep and ancient consciousness of moral depravation? Whence, but from some perverted tradition respecting the true sacrifice to be once offered for the sins of mankind? In the oblation of the firstborn, originally instituted by God himself, we behold the death of Him who is denominated the Firstborn, obscurely exhibited; and in the constant use of fire, the invariable scriptural emblem of wrath and jealousy, we view the indignation of that God, who is a consuming fire,



averted from our guilty race, and poured out on the immaculate head of our Great Intercessor. Had a consciousness of purity reigned in the ancient idolaters, it does not appear why they should have had more reason to dread the vengeance of the Deity, than to expect and to claim his favour."

17. We do not proceed far into the Mosaic narrative till we are informed of the translation of Enoch into heaven, a striking event, calculated, as it was doubtless intended, to impress the minds of men, amid the progress of corruption, with the realities of the invisible world. There are traces of this also to be found in the traditions of the heathen world. Hence the fabled translation into heaven of the heroes of the classical antiquity.

18. One of the most remarkable facts in the history of the antediluvian world is the great longevity of mankind,—a longevity so great as almost to indicate that the constitution of man was very different before and after the deluge. Infidelity has attempted to smile at this also as incredible. Such scepticism is altogether unreasonable, if we only admit that it is possible for the same Omnipotence which made man at first to change his physical constitution, or to limit the period of his mortal existence, as it may please him. It was, for obvious reasons, of importance at that early age in the history of the world, that the number of births should exceed that of deaths. "All," says Josephus, "who have committed to writing the antiquities either of the Greeks or Barbarians, attest this longevity of men before the flood. Manetho, who wrote an account of the Egyptians, Berosus, who compiled an account of the affairs of Chaldea, and Mochus and Hestiaeus, and with them Hieronymus the Egyptian, who have treated of the affairs of Egypt, agree with me in this." Also Hesiod and *others* relate that the ancients lived a thousand years.

19. Similar traditions are still prevalent among the Burmans, Chinese, and other nations. Indeed all authors agree in reckoning ten generations from the creation of man to the deluge, agreeably to the account of Scripture. Nor should we pass unnoticed, when reflecting on the longevity of men in former ages, the great change which must have taken place in the condition of man, and in the earth which he inhabits. It has been supposed that the evil produced by sin was experienced more powerfully as the wickedness of men increased; and that the original constitution of man formed for a long existence, was gradually weakened and broken. The divine

wisdom appointed the longevity of man in those early days, that the earth might be quickly peopled. In proportion as mankind multiplied, their years were gradually shortened. In the second century after the flood, none lived above two hundred and forty years; and in the age of Abraham, few lived more than one hundred.

20. In connexion with the longevity of men in early times, we may notice that the traditionary sentiments of heathen nations confirm the Mosaic account of men of a gigantic stature, who were inured to deeds of violence and rapine. The poets and historians of Greece and Rome relate that there were giants in the early ages of the world, whom they describe as a race of men who were fierce, strong, and insolent,—whose corporeal strength was prodigiously great, and who dared to wage war even with the gods themselves.

21. Notwithstanding these testimonies to the truth of the Mosaic account of the gigantic stature of men in early times, it has been the subject of cavil with captious and uninformed infidel writers. In animadverting on the sneers of Paine, in reference to the notice by the sacred historian of the gigantic size of Og's bedstead, Bishop Watson remarks:—"You make no allowance for the size of a royal bed, nor even suspect that king Og might have been possessed with the same kind of vanity which occupied the mind of king Alexander, when he ordered his soldiers to enlarge the size of their beds, that they might give to the Indians, in succeeding ages, a great idea of the prodigious stature of a Macedonian. My philosophy teaches me to doubt of many things; but it does not teach me to reject every testimony which is opposite to my experience: had I been born in Shetland, I could, on proper testimony, have believed in the existence of the Lincolnshire ox, or of the largest dray-horse in London, though the oxen and horses in Shetland had not been bigger than mastiffs."

22. From this short review of the sacred and the profane accounts of the antediluvian world, it appears, that while the coincidence is more or less remarkable, the facts related by all are substantially the same. The one is plain, simple, and exhibiting internal evidences of its truth, in accordance with its claims to divine authority; the credibility of the other is weakened by the absurdities with which it is mingled. Scripture serves to explain profane history, and profane history confirms and demonstrates the authenticity of Scripture.

23. We now come to the deluge, an event which is represented as expressive of the displeasure of God against the persevering wickedness of mankind, and indelible traces of which must be found in the civil and natural history of the world. The magnitude of this catastrophe, extending to the whole race of men, one family alone excepted, exhibited so terribly the power and justice of God, as to have deeply impressed the minds of the survivors, and as to have left physical vestiges on the globe of its greatness and universality.

24. This event took place about sixteen hundred years after the creation. The sacred historian describes with minuteness and simplicity the circumstances which occasioned it, and the effects which it produced. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord."\* Of this good man it is said, that "he was just and perfect in his generation, and walked with God." He was therefore selected to be the father of a new race, and to be the instrument of conveying knowledge and religion to the succeeding generations of mankind. He is made acquainted with the divine purpose regarding him; and is directed to build an ark in which a remnant of the human race and of the inferior animals might be preserved from destruction by the flood of waters which was to cover the face of the earth. "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch; and this is the fashion thou shalt make it of, the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits."

25. Reckoning the cubit at eighteen inches, Dr. Hales proves the ark to have been of the burthen of 42,413 tons. "A first-rate man-of-war is between 2,200 and 2,300 tons; and consequently the ark had the capacity or stowage of eighteen of such ships, the largest in present use, and might carry 20,000 men, with provisions for six months, besides the weight of 1,800 cannons, and of all military stores. Can we doubt of its being sufficient

\* Gen. iv.

to contain eight persons, and about two hundred or two hundred and fifty pair of four-footed animals ; a number to which, according to M. Buffon, all the various distinct species may be reduced, together with all the subsistence necessary for a twelve-month?" To these are to be added all the fowls of the air, and such reptiles and insects as cannot live under water.

26. Into the ark, the receptacle prepared by divine appointment, the various living beings which could not exist in water, entered in pairs, directed by an instinct not more remarkable than that by which they are actuated at particular seasons. "Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights : and the waters increased and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth ; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth ; and all the high hills that were under the whole heavens were covered. Fifteen cubits upwards did the water prevail ; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth ; both of fowl and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man : all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven ; and they were destroyed from the earth : and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days."

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION FURTHER PROVED.

1. THE simple and striking account preserved in the Mosaic record, of the most awful dispensation of providence with which



the world has been visited, is confirmed by ancient history, and by the traditionary testimonies of almost all nations. An event attended with effects so widely desolating could not fail to make a deep impression on the mind of man, as well as on the globe which he inhabits; and the memory of it must have been transmitted through the succeeding generations of the family of mankind. The amount of concurring testimony accordingly coincides with this reasonable supposition. The truth of the Mosaic account of a universal deluge is confirmed,

2. (I.) By the notices of ancient history regarding the numbers and condition of mankind. The destruction of mankind by the deluge, with the exception of one family, would of course, for a long period, occasion a great paucity of the human race in relation to the habitable globe. This accordingly is fully established as an incontrovertible fact;—a fact not in the slightest degree affected by the claims of certain nations to greater antiquity than is consistent with authentic history. “We find,” says Sir William Jones, a most competent judge, “no certain monument or even probable tradition of nations planted, empires and states raised, laws enacted, cities built, navigation improved, commerce encouraged, arts invented, or letters contrived, above twelve, or at most fifteen or sixteen centuries, before the birth of Christ.” It has been fully proved that in regard to all pagan nations authentic history begins only a few centuries before the Christian era; the ages preceding being clouded by fable.

3. (II.) The Mosaic account of the deluge is corroborated by the origin and progress of the arts and sciences. The history of these clearly proves that they were only in their infancy at a period long subsequent to the flood. Though Egypt has been considered to be the mother of the arts and sciences, there is no evidence to show that they had made great progress in the days of Moses, or even in a much later age. We might be apt to conclude from the mention of physicians in the end of the book of Genesis, that the medical art had attained to a considerable degree of cultivation; but the persons alluded to as physicians were mere embalmers of the dead; and were held in low estimation by the Egyptians. It is probable that long after these times they were, like the Babylonians, entirely destitute of persons skilful in curing diseases; and that the best method they could think of, after consulting their oracles, was, when any one was sick, that as many persons should see and

speak to him as possibly could ; so that if any one who saw the sick person had had the like distemper, he might say what was proper to be done in that condition. Few vestiges have been transmitted to us of the skill of the Egyptians in the arts and sciences. Dr. Halley has shown that their earliest astronomical observations are those performed by the Greeks of Alexandria, less than three hundred years before Christ.

4. With regard to Greece and Rome, all are acquainted with their history ; all know that though they rose to the highest distinction in the arts, and in the attainments of science, it was at a period comparatively recent. The researches of learned men have fully shown how groundless the pretensions of the Chinese are to an antiquity inconsistent with the truth of the sacred history. They are still but children in regard to knowledge, and retain many of the attributes of a rude and barbarous people. Even the Hindoos, perhaps the most anciently civilized people on the face of the earth, and who have least deviated from their originally established forms, have unfortunately no history. Among an infinite number of books of mystical theology and abstruse metaphysics, they do not possess a single volume that is capable of affording any distinct account of their origin. In short, the more the history of nations is closely studied, the stronger is the confirmation which it affords of the truth of the account which Moses gives of what may be styled the second origin of the human race after the destruction of the antediluvian world.

5. (III.) This is further and fully corroborated by the traditionary testimony of all nations. The traditions of the deluge, as preserved in ancient and in modern times, and in all quarters of the globe, are given at length by Faber in his *Horæ Mosaicæ*. The evidence which is thence derived is the stronger as it proceeds from tribes and nations widely separated from each other, and who were unconscious, at least in many instances, of the value of the testimony which they were instrumental in conveying.

6. Similar traditions to those which obtained among the Greeks and Romans have prevailed among the Persians, the Hindoos, Burmans, Chinese, Mexicans, Peruvians, and the inhabitants of the South Sea islands. In reference to the opinions which obtain among the latter in regard to the deluge, Mr. Ellis, in his *Polynesian Researches*, remarks, "I have

frequently conversed with the people on the subject both in the northern and southern groups, but could never learn that they had any accounts of the windows of heaven having been opened, or the rain having descended. The anger of the gods is considered as the cause of the inundation of the world, and the destruction of its inhabitants. The element employed in effecting it is the same as that mentioned in the Bible; and in the Tahitian tradition, the boat or canoe being used as the means of safety to the favoured family, and the preservation of the only domestic animals found on the islands, appear corrupted fragments of the memorial of Noah, the ark, and its inmates. These, with other minor points of coincidence between the native traditions and the Mosaic account of the deluge, are striking, and warrant the inference, that, although the former are deficient in many particulars, and have much that is fabulous in their composition, they yet refer to the same event. The memorial of a universal deluge found among all nations existing in those communities by which civilization, literature, science, and the arts have been carried to the highest perfection, as well as among the most untutored and barbarous, preserved through all the migrations and vicissitudes of the human family from the remote antiquity of its occurrence to the present time, is a most decisive evidence of the authenticity of revelation. The brief yet satisfactory testimony to this event preserved in the oral traditions of a people secluded for ages from intercourse with other parts of the world, forms a strong proof that the Scripture record is irrefragable."

7. "Is it possible," says M. Cuvier, "that mere accident should afford so striking a result as to unite the traditional origin of the Assyrian, Indian, and Chinese monarchies to the same epoch of about 4000 years from the present time? Could the ideas of nations who possessed almost no mutual affinities, whose language, religion, and laws had nothing in common—could they conspire to one point did not truth bring them together?"

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## CHAPTER V.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION FURTHER PROVED.

1. (IV.) WE shall now proceed to consider how far the events which took place after the deluge are confirmed by ancient history and traditionary testimony. It is obvious that the

transactions related in the Pentateuch, and which approach nearer to the time of the deluge, because they affect more or less the ancestors of all nations, should be better known by tradition to the Gentiles than those detailed in the other historical books of Scripture, and which concerned merely the Israelites and the kingdoms situated immediately on their frontiers.

2. We might, however, expect that a traditionary account would be preserved of every remarkable event that took place before the dispersion of mankind. A considerable period after the flood, the sacred historian informs us that the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. As the descendants of one common family, they spoke of course the same language in common. "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do. Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel: because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

3. From this statement we learn that the family of mankind, or a considerable portion of it, settled in the plain of Shinar, that is, the country around the city which was afterwards called Babylon; that they formed the resolution of erecting a city and an exceedingly high tower; and that as the plain which they had selected contained no stone, they proceeded to carry their purpose into execution by burning clay into bricks, and mingling them with the bitumen with which that region abounds. There is no probability in the notion that they designed this vast building to secure them against a future deluge; on the contrary, the chief object of their leaders seems to have been the acquisition of renown. But as it was the



purpose of God that mankind should replenish the earth ; and that for this end they should be divided into different nations, and inhabit different countries, he interposed in the present instance to frustrate their design, and to force them to the separation by which his will should be accomplished. He confounded their language that they understood not one another's speech.

4. Various opinions have been entertained regarding the nature and extent of the confusion of tongues. Some have thought that by this we are merely to understand such a difference of sentiments, and dividing of their counsels, as led to quarrelling and separation. But the variety of languages that has ever since prevailed on the earth tends to prove that by divine interposition their language was confounded. The degree, however, in which this was confounded is not so easily ascertained. But the most natural opinion seems to be, that mankind, when this event happened, were divided into three branches according as they were descended from the three sons of Noah, and that such confusion took place in the language that had hitherto been common to them all as to render it impossible for them to carry on their designs in mutual co-operation. In accordance with this view, learned men have attempted to trace the different languages of the world to three great original sources.

5. An interposition thus remarkable could not easily be forgotten, for it is but natural to expect that the dispersed builders of the pyramid would carry with them, wherever they went, the knowledge of their miraculous discomfiture. Under some form or other an account of the fact must have been long generally preserved. Such accordingly we find to be the case. There are distinct references to it in the records and traditions of pagan nations. According to Herodotus there was a tower in Babylon which had been built of bricks and cemented with bitumen, and which was six hundred feet high, being higher than the loftiest Egyptian pyramid. The circumstance of its being constructed with burnt bricks and bitumen is also attested by Justin, Quintus Curtius, and even modern travellers. Nor can there be a doubt that, though this tower was repaired by Belus II. king of Babylon, it was the same, or at least built upon the same spot, and consisting of the same materials, as that which is mentioned in the book of Genesis. The name of Babel, which signifies confusion, confirms the general history

of the event. The materials used in the building of the tower furnish an undesigned corroboration. Built in an extended plain, where stones could with difficulty be procured, it is said that they used brick; and by the slime which they substituted in place of mortar, is evidently meant the bitumen with which, according to Herodotus, that country abounds.

6. In addition to these attestations of the Mosaic history of Babel, there are vestiges remaining to the present day of the mouldering pyramid. Mr. Rich states that the total circumference of its base is now only 2111 feet, and that its present height does not exceed 140. The summit is covered with heaps of rubbish, in digging into some of which layers of broken burnt brick cemented with mortar are discovered, and whole bricks with inscriptions on them are here and there found. The whole is covered with innumerable fragments of pottery, brick, bitumen, pebbles, vitrified brick or scoria.

7. The next event we shall notice is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; an event which is represented as having taken place by fire from heaven; and the truth of the representation is confirmed by ancient historians and modern travellers. These cities were marked as the objects of the divine vengeance in consequence of the extreme wickedness of the inhabitants. When Lot had escaped, according to the instructions which he had received, it is said, "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." The sulphureous and vitreous matter arising from Sodom overtook her while she lingered behind the rest, and enveloped and shrouded her in its ashes; and it is highly probable that the human form was preserved, as there are many instances of substances retaining the forms of plants or of animals upon which such matter falls. The narrative of the sacred historian is attested by Tacitus, who relates that a tradition prevailed in his days of certain powerful cities having been destroyed by thunder and lightning, and of the plain in which they were situated having been burnt up. He adds, that evident traces of such a catastrophe remained; that the soil appeared to be parched; that it had lost the power of vegetation, and that whatever sprang up became black and crumbled into dust; that the plain of Sodom became the

salt sea, which is of great extent; that its taste is so nauseous, and its smell so disagreeable, that fishes cannot live in it; that it is not impelled by any wind; that heavy bodies when thrown into it are borne up as by a solid, and that at certain seasons it emits bitumen in great quantities.

8. The same things are in substance said by Diodorus Siculus, Pliny, and Strabo. With these attestations of ancient historians the relations of modern travellers agree.

9. It was in the age in which the cities of the plain were destroyed that the patriarch Abraham lived. The connexion which this patriarch had with the nations besides the Jews, of which he was the progenitor, his great power and distinguished character, have rendered his name famous in history, and have formed the subjects of many eastern traditions which corroborate the Mosaic history. It is unnecessary to go into detail on this particular.

10. Justin mentions that Jacob had twelve sons, that Joseph was the youngest, and that he was sold by his brethren, and came into Egypt, where, learning magical arts, he rose in favour with the king. He says that divine and human laws were equally known to him, insomuch that he foresaw the sterility of the land some years before it took place; that all the people must have perished if the king had not taken his advice in laying up a store of corn for the occasion.

11. The sacred historian informs us that the famine was over all the face of the earth, and that all countries came into Egypt to buy corn, because the famine was sore in all lands. Though the expressions, all countries and all lands, might be understood in a limited sense, yet there is some reason for believing, that the seven years' dearth foretold by Joseph affected even the remote region of China. The famine described in the Pentateuch commenced, according to Archbishop Usher, 1708 years before the Christian era: that which is mentioned by the Chinese historians took place about 1740 years before the same epoch. The discrepancy, therefore, between the two calculations amounts only to *thirty-two* years; a difference so trifling in so large a period, that we can scarcely entertain a doubt respecting the identity of the two events.

12. I formerly alluded to the testimony given by ancient history to the reality of the character of Moses as an historian and legislator. The leading particulars in his history are attested by the most respectable pagan writers. Justin,

Tacitus, and others, while they differ in some points from the sacred historian, concur in establishing the truth of his narrative. Diodorus Siculus relates that a dreadful disorder afflicting the Egyptians, it was declared that it should never be removed till all foreigners were expelled the country; that Moses, a man of great courage, was the lawgiver and leader of the Jews; that he taught them to worship God; divided them into twelve tribes; gave them such ritual observances as to separate them from other nations; and adds, that he heard these things from God. He relates, that among the natives of the spot a tradition was in existence even at the time when he wrote, which had been transmitted to them through a long line of ancestors, that the whole bay was once laid bare to the very bottom, the waters retiring to the opposite shores. But the waters soon returned to their accustomed channel.

13. The very country, indeed, where the event is said to have happened, bears testimony in some degree to the accuracy of the Mosaic narrative. Still is the Scriptural Etham denominated Etti; the wilderness of Shur, the mountain of Sinai, and the country of Paran, are still known by the same names; and Marah, Elath, and Midian, are still familiar to the ears of the Arabs. The grove of Elim yet remains; and its twelve fountains have neither increased nor diminished in number since the days of Moses.

14. Thus we see how various, full, and incontrovertible are the evidences by which the particulars in the history of Moses, in connexion with the journeying and miraculous preservation of Israel, are established. Their departure from Egypt, for example, is a fact universally acknowledged; though pagan writers differ as to the reasons which they assign for it. According to some of the authors consulted by Tacitus, the Israelites were violently expelled; but according to other authors adduced by Tacitus, they were not expelled, but merely emigrated; and the reason assigned for their voluntarily emigration is, that the vast population of Egypt exceeded its resources. But while the pagan writers thus contradict each other, and even oppose the Mosaic narrative in their mode of accounting for the departure of Israel out of Egypt under the guidance of Moses, the fact of the exodus is admitted by them all. And, when we remember that the Pentateuch, as was already demonstrated, was written in the age of Moses, and that Manetho, the earliest of the Gentile historians cited in



opposition to Moses, was high priest of Heliopolis during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and therefore flourished twelve centuries after the exodus of Israel, we cannot hesitate to believe that the account of the sacred historian, in regard to the circumstances that caused the departure of the Hebrews out of Egypt, is the truth.

15. There are many notices of the religious opinions and condition of the nations of antiquity which agree with all that we can learn from any other source. The Arabians, Persians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Canaanites, are acknowledged to have been the most ancient nations; and to have held notions of religion, in the earlier period of their history, much more pure than those which they possessed in after times, or than those of other heathen nations. The Assyrians and Chaldeans were among the first who corrupted religion, though they seem to have retained the knowledge and worship of the true God for a long time, in union with many superstitions. The treatment which Abraham received from the Phenicians, the Egyptians, and Abimelech, a king of Canaan, shows that reverence was entertained for the one true God.

16. The sacred historian presents us incidentally with information respecting the sources of human knowledge and inventions in the arts, which the traditions and histories of almost every nation confirm. The accuracy of the description given by Moses of the manners of the early ages, is fully established by the same testimony. That mixture of power and independence, joined with simplicity, mentioned in the Scriptures as characteristic of early nations, is corroborated by every account that has reached us of early times. The nations around Palestine are described in the sacred history as advanced in the knowledge of the arts and sciences, but sunk in gross ignorance and superstition; and the correctness of this statement cannot be denied. The Greeks received much of their knowledge from the east, and Pythagoras, and afterwards Plato, spent several years in Egypt, and in other eastern countries, collecting information. On the supposition that an original revelation had been communicated, the most considerable vestiges were to be expected in the eastern nations, which were nearest the seat of the human race. Corruption, even in those nations, rapidly advanced; and imagination cannot conceive a more debasing superstition than that into which the Egyptians fell, particularly in their

worship of animals, or that of the Phenicians, Babylonians, and Assyrians.

17. Scripture shows that Egypt had risen in civilization as early as the time of Joseph. Its sovereigns were surrounded with the pomp of royalty; they had their guards and state-prisons. In the time of Moses they were acquainted with the art of engraving, and also with what must have contributed much to their improvement, the art of writing. The people of Canaan also, the most corrupted and debased by superstition, were advanced in wealth and civilization. They appear to have cultivated agriculture and gardening with considerable success; and that they had made some progress in many of the useful and fine arts may be inferred from the allusions to their vessels of silver and gold, of brass and of iron; and to their sculpture and music.

18. Ancient history confirms the truth of this representation, by bearing testimony to the early improvement and power of Egypt. Herodotus says, that all the arts, and even the worship of the gods, were learned from the Egyptians. Diodorus Siculus mentions that the Greeks learned agriculture from Egypt. Athens was founded by Cecrops, a citizen of Lower Egypt; and the celebrated court of Areopagus was formed after an Egyptian model. The various traditions respecting Cadmus also corroborate the intimations of Scripture concerning the Phenicians; as it is probable that he came from Phenicia at the time of Joshua, whose victories it has been thought contributed to the departure of himself and his colony. To him the Greeks owed their knowledge of the arts of life; and he was the first who introduced letters among them.

19. Thus, the more narrowly we compare the facts, and even incidental allusions, contained in the narrative of the sacred historian, with the testimony furnished by pagan writers and traditions, and with the manners, customs, and progress in the arts and sciences of the most ancient nations, the more shall we be satisfied of the perfect truth of the Mosaic record. Yet, according to the ordinary course of human events, to use the words of Bryant, "the distance of time is so great, and the scene of action so remote and so little frequented, that one would imagine there could have been no traces obtained of such very early occurrences. It must therefore raise within us a kind of religious reverence for the sacred writer, when we see such evidences still remain of his wonderful history. We

read of expeditions undertaken by Osiris, Sesostris, Bacchus, Semiramis, and the Atlantians, into different parts of the world. But no vestige remains of their operations. The history recorded by Moses appears like a bright but remote object, seen through the glass of an excellent optician, clear, distinct, and well defined. When we look back upon the accounts transmitted concerning the Assyrians, Egyptians, Medes, and Scythians; or those of the early ages of Italy and Greece;—while we gaze, the form dies away, and we are soon lost in gloom and uncertainty. Concerning the Israelites, we have a regular and consistent history. And, though they were roving in a desert for forty years, and were far removed from the rest of the world; yet we have seen what manifest tokens remain of their journeying and miraculous preservation.” We now proceed to observe,—

20. (V.) That the universal testimony of the Jewish people and Jewish writers establishes the reality of the miraculous facts recorded in the Mosaic history. The evidence derived from the unanimous testimony of the Jewish nation has been already noticed. We also adverted to the proofs which are afforded of the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation by a series of independent writers succeeding one another from the earliest to the latest period of their history. All their writings, whether sacred or profane, and all their national institutions, bear testimony to the reality of the miracles by which the law was accompanied. I remark,—

21. (VI.) That the reality of these is confirmed by public memorials and institutions appointed expressly at the time when they were wrought for their commemoration. This consideration is of peculiar importance; and will be found to furnish a species of evidence for the truth of the miracles performed in attestation of divine revelation which no pretended miracles can claim. If we may fairly suspect miracles to be false when the accounts of them are not published to the world till long after the time when they are said to have been performed;—or, when the accounts are not published in the place where it is pretended they were performed, but are propagated only at a great distance from the supposed scene of action;—or, if in the time when and the place where they took their rise, they might be suffered to pass without examination; may we not, and ought we not, to presume those miracles to be true to which these criteria apply? “I may safely chal-

lenge you," says the author of the Criterion, "to produce from ancient history, or from the more modern relaters of wonders among the papists, any particular miracle, which, if it can be traced up to contemporary witnesses, and was published on the spot, will not be instantly observed to labour under one or other of the above-mentioned defects. We shall ever find the people refusing any examination of the miracle, through a blind credulity and eagerness of belief, or the promoters of it armed with power rendering an examination impossible. Take your Livy into your hands, and you will find this to be remarkably the case of the prodigies with which his history so abounds. A miracle, the evidence of which was not inquired into by those to whom it was first proposed, ought to be rejected equally with a miracle, the evidence of which could not be inquired into."

22. The very reverse of this is the case in regard to the miracles which attest the truth of divine revelation. The miracles which were specially designed to prove the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation were recorded and published at the time when and at the place where they were wrought: and still more, there were certain commemorative ordinances which existed among the Jews from the period when the miraculous events took place, which miraculous events these ordinances or monuments were appointed to commemorate. It will be found impossible to account for their continued existence without admitting the facts to which they related, and of which they testified.

23. Such monuments gave indubitable evidence through every succeeding age of the miracles by which God himself attested the divine commission of his servant Moses. Thus, we read in Exodus xvi. 32, "This is the thing which the Lord commandeth: Fill an omer of it (that is the manna), to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony to be kept." Was not this a standing demonstration, that the people were miraculously fed with manna forty years in the wilderness? The miraculous cure of the people from the bite of the fiery serpents was commemorated in a similar



manner. Moses, in obedience to the command of God, made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived. This brazen serpent was preserved as a memorial to the Jewish nation until the time of Hezekiah, by whom it was broken in pieces on account of the superstitious veneration paid to it by the people.

24. In like manner, to commemorate the wonderful passage of the Israelites over Jordan, Joshua erected twelve monumental stones, to afford perpetual demonstration to all succeeding ages of the reality of the miraculous event commemorated. "It came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Take ye twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man; and command ye them, saying, Take ye hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones: and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night. And Joshua called the twelve men whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord: when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. And the children of Israel did so, as Joshua commanded; and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel; and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there until this day. And the people came up out of Jordan, on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the

children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.”\*

25. When we consider that the account of the miraculous event thus commemorated was published in a written document at the time when the event is said to have taken place; that from the first erection of the monumental stones, the eye-witnesses of the passage over Jordan taught their children the fact which they were designed to commemorate; that these children again taught their children the same, and so onward from generation to generation; it is manifest that the belief associated with the stones must have been as old as the erection of the stones. “For, if we suppose its origin to be posterior to their erection, the man who first introduced it must not only have persuaded the Israelites that the stones were simply commemorative of the alleged facts; but he must additionally have persuaded them, that they themselves already knew the stones to be thus commemorative, having universally received that knowledge in uninterrupted succession from their fathers. Now the Israelites of any later period could be no more induced to admit such a self-contradicting falsehood, than the English of the present day could be brought to believe, both that Stonehenge was reared to commemorate a miraculous passage of the Normans across the dry bed of the British channel, and that they themselves had received this account of its origin and import in unbroken succession from father to son, ever since the occurrence of that stupendous miracle. In each case, the ground of the impossibility is the very same; no man can be persuaded to believe, that he always previously knew a matter which is now for the first time communicated to him.”

26. In addition to the memorials alluded to, there were remarkable institutions appropriated to commemorate miraculous interpositions of Providence, and which were observed during the whole period of the Jewish history.

27. (I.) Circumcision was observed by the Jews as a seal

\* Josh. chap. iii. and iv.

and memorial of the covenant which had been made with Abraham. Though this rite was adopted by some other ancient nations, it was the Jews alone who, by assigning the reason of its origin, connected it with an historical fact. Of the reality of this fact, namely, God's covenant with Abraham, it was a perpetual demonstration.

28. (II.) The Passover was another commemorative institution. The sacred historian thus explains the reason of its appointment. "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token on the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I shall pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations, ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."\* The circumstance particularly deserving of our attention here is, the perpetuity of this ordinance from the very night when all the firstborn of Egypt are said to have miraculously perished, and when the Israelites emigrated in a body from the country. This perpetuity is enjoined with peculiar emphasis; and the reason and design of this injunction are given in the following remarkable words:—"Ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." That the passover was thus regularly celebrated, from age to age, by the Israelites, from the night in which all the firstborn of Egypt were miraculously destroyed till the present day, is unquestionable; so that the institution appointed to commemorate the miracle, as well as the explanatory comment in the Pentateuch, has always been, and continues to be, a standing memorial of the extraordinary interposition of God. As the rite of circumcision demonstrates the making of God's covenant with Abraham and his posterity; so the rite of the passover equally demon-

\* Exod. chap. xii.

strates the miraculous death of the firstborn, and the triumphant exodus of Israel.

29. (III.) The feast of Pentecost, so called because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day after the passover, and consequently on the fiftieth day after Israel's departure from Egypt, was designed chiefly to commemorate the giving of the law from Mount Sinai; and, in connexion with this event, the fulfilment of God's promise in the establishment of his people in the land of Canaan. In the Old Testament it is called the Feast of Weeks, because it was celebrated seven weeks after the passover; and the Feast of Harvest and of First Fruits, because it was observed at that season of the year when the harvest usually closed, and when, in obedience to the law, each head of a family took some of the first fruits of the land and presented them to the Lord, in acknowledgment of the miraculous providences experienced by the nation. "And it shall be, when thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; that thou shalt take of the first of the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give it us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God. And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous; and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terrible-ness, and with signs, and with wonders; and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me."\*

\* Deut. chap. xxvi.



30. (IV.) The feast of Tabernacles was instituted in like manner as a memorial of the forty years during which the people of Israel dwelt in tents or booths in the wilderness. "Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine."

31. In the following words there is a repetition of the injunction regarding the observance of the three great festivals: "Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty." These commemorative institutions were sacredly observed by the Jews, from the time of their appointment by Moses till the present day; and the perpetuity of their observance furnishes the most powerful evidence of the reality of the miraculous facts of which they are memorials.

32. Indeed, every part of the Jewish ritual had a direct or indirect reference to these miraculous events, especially their deliverance from Egypt. The exhortations given to them to exercise kindness and mercy, are enforced by the consideration that they were bondmen in the land of Egypt, and that God delivered them. The civil government of the Hebrews was founded upon the same miraculous facts. The moral law was prefaced by the consideration, that its author was the Lord God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. The appointment and observance of the laws of Moses could not have taken place without the continued exercise of miraculous power. The law of the Sabbatical year was a remarkable instance of this; as was also the year of jubilee, which was celebrated every fiftieth year. On these two occasions, it was appointed that the whole law should be read with peculiar solemnity. Did not the institution of these laws and ordinances proceed upon the ground of the miraculous deliverance of the people, and of the protecting power of God? Does not their continued observance show their belief of the miracles which their institutions commemorated, and which their law recorded? When they ask, What mean these statutes? Thou shalt say, "We were bondmen in the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought us out thence with a mighty hand."

33. We have now proved the genuineness and authenticity of the Mosaic record; the reality of the miracles of which that narrative gives an account; that they are attested by Moses, a

man distinguished for integrity, wisdom, and piety, who was neither an enthusiast, dupe, nor impostor; that the miraculous facts are accompanied with frequent appeals to the people as witnesses of their reality, a proof which could never have been given, had not the truth of the facts been unquestioned and acknowledged; that the miracles are further corroborated by the traditions related by heathen authors, which correspond with the facts related in the Mosaic history; that they are supported by the uniform belief of the nation, from the time of Moses to the latest period of their history; and that they are established by public monuments, and the peculiar constitution and government of the Jewish nation.

34. We are now capable of estimating what degree of weight is due to the flippant remark of Hume, when he says that the Pentateuch is "corroborated by no concurring testimony;"—a remark probably made in entire ignorance of the great amount of collateral evidence by which the Mosaic record is accompanied; and a remark which is well adapted to the designs of those whose minds are biassed against the claims of divine revelation.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT—  
MOSES, A PROPHET; OR THE DOCTRINES OF THE MOSIAC DISPENSATION—ON  
THE DESIGNS OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION.

1. MAN having fallen by transgression from the purity and uprightness with which he was created, and having, as is clearly proved by experience, entailed depravity on all his offspring, it was morally impossible, from the very nature of things, that the human race could, by their own efforts, extricate themselves from inevitable destruction. They could neither satisfy the justice of God, nor produce in their nature the holiness which had been lost. Deliverance, therefore, could come to them only from God.

2. The deliverance which he designed for them, as well as the mode of its accomplishment, he revealed to our first parents immediately after the fall. This redemption formed the theme of the system of inspired truth from the beginning; though made known with different degrees of clearness, and under different successive modifications, severally fitted to three successive periods, and varying only in the mode of communication

according to the peculiar exigencies of those three periods to which they respectively belong. It was the reconciliation, as founded in the sacrifice of the Redeemer, that connects together, as one genuine and inspired system of religion, the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian dispensations. The first two were so constituted as to look forward to the last, as the ultimate and most perfect revelation of the will of God to man. The same great and spiritual blessings were enjoyed by those who lived under them all, though possessed in very different measures.

3. The Mosaic dispensation was intended to answer several purposes, of which the two following were the chief: First, To preserve the knowledge and worship of the only living and true God, the Creator of all things, in purity among one people specially separated from the surrounding nations for that end. Abraham and his posterity were selected to be the depositaries of the doctrines of heavenly truth. With this view the descendants of that patriarch were miraculously conducted out of Egypt; taken into covenant with God; and ultimately fixed in Palestine, as the place of residence assigned to them by divine wisdom. All that they were there taught to believe, as well as to practise, was calculated deeply to impress their minds with the doctrine of the unity of God.

4. But, secondly, The Levitical dispensation was also specially intended to be preparatory to the Gospel. It was founded on the doctrine of a Mediator. It exhibited by typical and shadowy representations the Divine Redeemer, the sacrifice and death by which he was to make reconciliation for iniquity; and the blessings of acceptance and of holiness which were to be, and which then were, obtained through his blood. The separation of the Hebrew nation from every other people, the promises and predictions of the coming Saviour which were given to them, and the numerous rites of that priesthood by which he was prefigured, were intended to prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his path straight.

5. The doctrines, precepts, and institutions of the Mosaic dispensation were in perfect accordance with these great and glorious designs. I shall now consider its doctrines as furnishing evidence of the divine legation of Moses.

6. In considering the doctrines contained in the Pentateuch with this view, we must place ourselves as much as possible in the times in which Moses wrote. We must consider what were

the notions of mankind in regard to the unity of God, his providence and moral government, and the duties which we owe to him. For, with respect to the divine unity, the doctrine approves itself so entirely to our reason; it so well harmonizes with the palpable unity of design which pervades the whole creation; and it appears to present itself so naturally to any thinking mind, that the very circumstance of its obviousness might well prevent its being adduced as any proof that the code which inculcates it was delivered by the inspiration of God.

7. Yet it is certain that mankind were ignorant of this apparently obvious truth; that whatever differences existed as to degrees of civilization, they were alike the worshippers of many gods; and that the doctrine of the divine unity, as the received national creed, was confined to one people. In the book which this people received as a revelation from God are inculcated with the most perfect simplicity the unity and perfection of God. "God created the heavens and the earth. God said unto Moses, I am that I am, the self-existent and eternal God, hath sent thee. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial to all generations. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Be ye holy, for I am holy." This all-perfect Being is declared to be the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, whose providence embraces all possible events and agencies; to be everlasting, omniscient, omnipresent, almighty, holy, just, merciful, and long-suffering. He is the God of the spirits of all flesh:—God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath. "He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. His work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. He is the judge of all the earth; he regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. He is an holy God. The Lord is nigh unto his people in all things that they call upon him for: when they cry unto him, he hears their voice, and looks on their affliction. To him belongeth vengeance and recompense. The Lord shall judge his people. He will not justify the wicked, and by no means clear the guilty; but he is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."

8. Thus, the purest and the most exalted notions of the Supreme Being were taught to the Jews at a period when the



nations of the earth were in gross darkness, and devoted to superstition and idolatry. These views were entertained by a people who were just emerged from the galling and debasing yoke of cruel bondage, and whose external circumstances were peculiarly unfavourable to the adoption of spiritual ideas. No legislator ever discovered, or, if he discovered, ever proclaimed, the pure and exalted notions of the Divinity which they entertained. Philosophers and legislators gave their countenance to polytheism; and never personally exemplified the duty of turning from idols to the worship of the living and true God. The question then naturally occurs, How did Moses obtain ideas so elevated, so different from, nay so opposite to, those entertained by all who preceded or followed him, and to all the tendencies of the people among whom he lived? How came the Jews, in opposition to all the weaknesses and vices of human nature, in opposition to the influence of custom, prejudice, and example, to separate themselves from the practices of the surrounding nations,—practices to which they were naturally and strongly attached? How are we to account for these facts, unless we admit the divine inspiration of the Hebrew prophet and legislator?

9. It will not surely be alleged that the Israelites, by intellectual culture, and by habits of abstract reasoning, arrived at the knowledge of those principles of religion of which all other nations were ignorant. This hypothesis cannot at least be maintained by those writers who stigmatize them, however unjustly, as remarkable for their ignorance and stupidity. The greater their ignorance, the more extraordinary their religious attainments. Still, it is certain that they were not given to abstract reasoning, or to refined speculation. They were so far from having discovered the doctrine of the divine unity, that they showed a strange and perpetual inclination to abandon it. They were so constantly inclined to fall into the polytheism of the heathen, that they were never cured of this depraved tendency, until the time of the Babylonian captivity. It is abundantly clear, then, that the doctrine was not philosophically excogitated by the Israelites themselves; and, accordingly, we find it, not artificially and abstractly demonstrated in their sacred books, but only authoritatively stated and enforced in them. The perfect rationality of the tenet is undoubted; but how happened it that the Hebrew legislator alone publicly maintained and inculcated it? Whence did he

himself receive such an opinion? Not in Egypt, the land of bestial and vegetable gods.

10. "Why was the divine unity the established doctrine of the rustic and little-inquisitive Israelites; while the philosophic Babylonians, the sagacious Egyptians, the deeply speculative Greeks, and the powerfully intellectual Romans, were universally devoted to the adoration of a myriad of deities? How happened it, that the truth should alone be found with the comparatively ignorant: while, however easy of discovery it may now seem to us, it should have escaped the observation of the wise and the cultivated?"

11. It has been maintained, indeed, that philosophers held the doctrine of the unity of the divine nature; though for political reasons they countenanced polytheism as the religion of the state. But I have shown that this opinion is utterly unfounded;\* and that even the Stoics, the most respectable sect of antiquity, were worshippers of many gods. The only divine unity which they held was the plastic energy of universal nature, acting by a fatal destiny, pervading all space, and ultimately identified with the whole frame of the material world. Whatsoever was seen, and whatsoever was touched, was a member of the great pantheistic god. Every intelligent soul was excerpted from his essence, and into his essence was at length re-absorbed. Some might pass through various transmigrations in their progress towards final beatitude; but absorption was the ultimate destiny of all. Such being the case, everything, whether spiritual or material, was a portion of the mighty pantheus. The world, therefore, and all that it contains, were necessarily uncreated; for all were equally parts of the one deity. Such was the divine unity of ancient philosophers. But the God whom Moses proclaimed, and whom Israel worshipped, was the only living and true God: a Being of infinite intelligence, wisdom, goodness, and power; who exists from everlasting to everlasting, who called the universe out of its original nothing, and who created, by an act of sovereign will, every individual intelligent soul. They venerated a Being who himself possesses strict individuality; and who is, and ever will be, totally distinct from every spirit which he has created. They revered a God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; who is guided not by destiny, but by the unerring law which springs from his own perfections; who

\* Dewar's Moral Philosophy, vol. ii.

does not with Epicurean indolence disregard the affairs of mortals, or attend only to those things which by men are counted great; but who, with omnipresent wisdom, beholds and directs all things. Such is the *one* God, as declared by Moses, and as worshipped by the Israelites. Yet never was his existence discovered by the unassisted wisdom of the most enlightened Gentiles.

12. With what admirable simplicity are the unity of the divine nature, and the other doctrines connected with it, stated in the books of Moses! They are inculcated in their native sublimity, apart from those absurd speculations which the most enlightened philosophers mingled with their best thoughts on religion. In the Scriptures, matter, in place of being represented as eternal, is said to have been created in common with all things by the power of God; from whom we have received our being, to whom all are subjected, and on whose will every creature depends. These great truths are announced with entire simplicity, removed alike from the abstraction of profound reasoning and the parade of human wisdom.

13. The very important principle that God, as the supreme, holy, and righteous Governor, has given laws to his intelligent creatures which are to form the rule of their conduct, is exhibited in the Old Testament Scriptures with great clearness and force. Reasonable and just as this tenet instantly approves itself to be to the mind of man, we never find it fully and distinctly recognised in the writings of heathen philosophers, or in the religions of the most refined of the Gentile nations. Though acts of enormous wickedness were represented as displeasing to the gods, and as exposing their perpetrators to their vengeance, this was more from political ends, than from any belief that the gods interfered in the affairs of mortals. It was allowed that if the rites of their worship were regularly observed, they interested themselves very little in the practice of moral duties. Nor could any other position be credited in regard to them; since they themselves were represented to the people as guilty of the most shameful vices; and the patrons and protectors of criminals.

14. But in the Old Testament all the principles and actions of men are connected with the laws of God, the Creator, Preserver, and moral Governor of the universe; who is now the witness, and who will hereafter be the impartial Judge of mankind. "Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising;

thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, though knowest it altogether.—Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”\*—“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. He will render to every man according to his works.” Yet this omniscient, pure, and holy God, is represented as good and merciful; as a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. He is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will also hear their cry, and will save them.”†

15. Whence did Moses, and the writers of the other books of the Old Testament, receive these exalted views of the purity and righteousness of God and of his government; views which are so transcendently superior to all the notions then entertained in enlightened nations, and by the most enlightened individuals? If any should be disposed to trace them to the genius and attainments of Moses himself, it may be asked, How came he by such sublime ideas at a period less favourable to refined speculation than the ages which succeeded it? And how came he to be so earnest in the promulgation of his doctrines; to be so successful in restraining a whole people from errors and rites to which they were so naturally and strongly attached? These things are altogether unaccountable on any other principle than the divine legation and divine inspiration of Moses.

\* Psalm cxxxix.

† Psalms ciii. and cxlv.



16. Then, again, with regard to the distribution of the good and the evil of the present life, how different were the notions which universally prevailed, from those which are taught in the Pentateuch and in the Old Testament. Mankind, then, as well as in after ages, had multiplied indefinitely the number of their gods. There was scarcely anything in nature, however monstrous, but some heathen nations worshipped as a god; so that, to use the language of the learned Dr. Cudworth, "in deifying the things of nature and parts of the world, they called everything by the name of God, and God by the name of everything." They had gods celestial and terrestrial, who presided over distinct tribes, and cities, groves, rivers, and fountains. These they ranked in various orders; but they conceived that to all of them religious worship was due. Even to those of them whom they regarded as evil beings, they gave divine honours. The Greeks and Romans, and other pagan nations, raised the chief of their deities to the place of the supreme divinity, whom they distinguished as the father of gods and king of men. What must have been the gross darkness that covered their minds, and what must have been the state of morals, when among the multitude of the gods there was not one of whom some scandalous thing might not be related; and when even Jupiter their head was represented as guilty of actions that ought not to be so much as named? These monstrous errors were universal and deep-rooted in the Gentile world; and all who had any pretensions to letters, in all the ranks and offices of life, whether in the senate or at the bar, in the army or upon the throne, were supporters of the established system of polytheism and idolatry.

17. Why among the Israelites alone should notions of a different and opposite character prevail? Moses represents the one living and true God as continually superintending and guiding the affairs of this world; as having all beings and all events under his notice and control; and as possessing an intimate knowledge of all the thoughts and all the ways of man. Whence could he receive these pure and elevated ideas of the character and government of God, but from God himself?

18. Again; it is a leading doctrine in the books of Moses, and in the writings connected with them, that sin is hateful to God, and that it must be punished. Fearful examples of God's determination to punish sin are given in that universal deluge in which mankind, with the exception of eight indi-

viduals, perished; and in the destruction, by miraculous interposition, of Sodom and Gomorrah. Such representations of the purity and righteousness of the divine character and government are calculated to inspire with sentiments of profound reverence for God, and of deep humility before him. If we compare them with the imperfect notions that men have ever entertained of sin, and of its consequences, their high sense of their own deserts, and their want of impression of their need of pardoning mercy, we cannot fail to be struck with the infinite superiority of the doctrines of the Old Testament Scriptures.

19. We must especially be sensible of this vast superiority when we consider, that these writings contained the promise of a Great Deliverer, who should save from sin, and from the evils it has produced. The revelation of this peculiar interposition was given with different degrees of light, in different periods of the Mosaic dispensation. The Hebrew legislator, who had himself clearly foretold the coming of the Redeemer, was succeeded by other prophets who minutely described the character, works, atoning sacrifice, and reign of the Saviour. Thus, the forgiveness of sins, and the way of acceptance with God, were made known with sufficient clearness to encourage sinful men to apply for pardoning mercy.

20. All the doctrines to which I have now adverted afford proofs more or less strong of the inspiration and divine authority of the Mosaic writings. Why should they be found in the sacred books alone? Why, in particular, should the doctrine of the unity of the divine nature have been inculcated by Moses with such perfect simplicity and clearness? For the evidence in proof of this great principle, arising from the phenomena of nature, is very far from being complete and decisive in any case. It is indeed certain that there does exist in nature a uniformity of plan; that, amid the greatest diversity, all things proceed according to established laws; that similar causes produce similar effects in every place, and at every period; that day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, return with exact regularity: and this argument, to minds sufficiently cultivated to appreciate it, serves to prove that there are not two infinite Beings, opposite in character and design: but it does not prove that there may not be two infinite Beings agreeing in character and in counsel.

21. Besides, it ought to be recollected, that the force of this

argument will depend on the degree of knowledge possessed by mankind. Those appearances of nature from which the philosopher justly infers a harmony of design, are not understood by the great multitude, and cannot, therefore, suggest any such notion. The mixture of good and evil in the present life, and the more awful and inexplicable phenomena of nature, would lead them to believe in the existence of a plurality of gods. Hence the origin of the sect called Manicheans, who held the existence of two deities, the one benevolent, the other malevolent. A slight survey of the progress of idolatry may satisfy us that reason, as exercised by fallen man, is unable, from the light of nature, to discover the unity of the Godhead. It was in proportion as reason was cultivated, that this doctrine was lost, and polytheism prevailed. When, in consequence of the dispersion of mankind after the confusion of tongues, they were removed from the depositaries of revelation, and were left to discover religious truth by the exercise of the understanding, they soon became as ignorant of the character of the true God as they were of the unity of his being. They worshipped the host of heaven, regarding them either as the visible representatives of the Deity, or as inhabited by beings of superior order, who had mediatorial influence with the Supreme Governor of all things. From offering adoration to the Deity through these representations of his power and goodness, the transition was easy of offering worship to themselves. In a few ages more, the picture drawn by the apostle was fully realized: "Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."\* The number of deities multiplied in proportion as the light of reason and of science advanced; and, as if to show more clearly the blindness of reason in the things of God, the errors of polytheism were far more gross and absurd in those states in which philosophy flourished, than among rude and savage nations. The crude notions of barbarous tribes concerning God and Deity, were less involved and remote from the truth than were the doctrines of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Persia, and Hindostan. Athens and Rome were full of the statues of the gods. If, as early as the

\* Rom. i. 22—32.

days of Hesiod, the number was thirty thousand, it was probably afterwards much greater among the Greeks, and it was certainly much greater among the Romans before the end of the republic. If, in addition to these facts, we keep in remembrance that the religion of the Romans was purer in the earlier than in the later ages of the commonwealth; that while they built temples, during the first hundred and seventy years, they did not place in them any image or figure of any kind, persuaded that it was impious to represent things divine by what is perishable; we must be convinced that the mere light of reason, unaided by that of revelation, has never led men to the knowledge of the unity of God.

22. But wherever the light of revelation has been enjoyed, this doctrine has been maintained. When the Scriptures announce the existence of one only living and true God, and describe his character as infinitely perfect, the doctrine seems so accordant with the lesson which is taught us by the uniformity of design visible in the universe, that we naturally suppose that it might be learned from this source alone; but the prevalence of polytheism and idolatry during so many ages, and in those countries where reason was cultivated most, is a sufficient proof that we owe our knowledge of the unity of God to that revelation which he has given of himself. He is there represented as asserting in terms of affecting sublimity the perfect unity of his nature. "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me. They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. There is no God else besides me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One?"\*

If these observations be just, they furnish a convincing argument in favour of the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

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## CHAPTER VII.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION PROVED FROM THE NATURE OF ITS LAWS, MORAL, CIVIL, AND MILITARY.

1. HE who forms a code of laws for the government of a nation, should possess talents of the highest order, and varied and extensive knowledge of mankind. But though Moses pos-

\* Is. xlv. 18—22; xlv. 9—21.



sessed such powers and acquirements, yet since he laid claim to a divine commission, and promulgated his laws as those of the Deity, we are to consider them more in reference to these high claims, than to the genius of their author.

2. In proceeding to the consideration of these laws, we must remark, that the government of the Israelites was an absolute theocracy; a state of which God himself is the head, and in which the people possess their land, as well as all their privileges, civil and religious, by a stipulated tenure immediately from him as their sovereign. In accordance with this constitution, the ordinances established among the Hebrews, while they were intended to effect a variety of subordinate purposes, were chiefly designed to preserve the Jewish nation distinct from every other people as the depositaries of heavenly knowledge, of pure religion, and of divine prophecy. They were chosen to be a peculiar people unto God, to be the instruments of fulfilling his gracious designs to the human race, at a time when ignorance and idolatry prevailed among the nations of the world. If we bear these things in mind, and consider the adaptation of the laws and ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation to the general state of society as it then existed in the earth, and to the particular state of the Jewish people, and the object proposed by their separation, we must be struck with the proof thus afforded of the divine wisdom and transcendent moral excellence by which those laws and ordinances are characterised. Let us consider,—

3. (I.) The moral precepts: and the summary of these contained in the ten commandments first demands our attention. These are to be viewed as elementary and fundamental principles of morals; as furnishing the outline of those eternal rules of rectitude by which individuals, families, and nations are to be governed. In these, the first thing required is, to worship and serve the one living and true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the great object of reverence, love, and adoration. In contradistinction to the manners and customs of the surrounding nations, and the gross superstitions in which they were involved, the worship of God by images is strictly and solemnly forbidden. These commands are enforced by various motives; and promises and threatenings are suggested as incitements to obedience.

4. The first table of the law is closed with a precept respecting the Sabbath;—an institution so beneficial in its

tendency in regard both to the temporal and the spiritual interests of mankind, that it bears clearly in itself the evidence of its divine origin. It forms a constant memorial of the power and goodness of God, serves to remind all of their obligations to him; to strengthen those affections of which God should be the constant object; and to counteract the spirit of polytheism and idolatry. It affords a grateful rest from the labours and cares of life, protects the poor and the destitute from the unfeeling demands which avarice would otherwise make on their exertions, teaches all the duties of humanity and mutual love, extends its influence even to the inferior animals, and unites with piety to God, tenderness to the meanest of his creation.

5. The duties which men owe to one another are enjoined next to those which they owe to God. Among these, the first duty to which our attention is directed is that of obedience, reverence, and affection to parents; a duty infinitely important in itself, and also as the foundation of all the social duties. It trains to habits of early obedience, respect for superiors, and submission to lawful authority. To this are added in the moral law, prohibitions regarding murder, theft, adultery, and false witness; and all the thoughts, desires, and actions which lead to the commission of these crimes.

6. These heads of moral obligation contained in the ten commandments are enforced by additional precepts, which display both the nature of the principles from which moral conduct must proceed, and point out the duties which the servants of God must perform. The law of Moses, while it prescribes many external ceremonial observances, all of the purest tendency, requires that the heart should be supremely given to God, and that the inward motive and disposition correspond with the external actions. This circumstance demands our particular attention, because not only infidels, but even persons well affected to divine revelation, have represented the law of Moses as a mere system of ceremonies, altogether unconnected with the state of the heart. Had this representation been consistent with truth, it would have furnished a strong presumption against the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation. But this is so far from being well founded, that the two great commandments quoted by our Lord, and contained in the New Testament, are derived from the law of Moses: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with

all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. And now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear him, to walk in all his ways, and to love and serve him with all thy heart and soul, and to keep his commandments?" Do not these commands require, that in all the duties of devotion, and in all the actions of the life, the love and fear of God should rule in the mind?

7. The law of Moses also enjoined Israel to love their neighbours as themselves. "Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I am the Lord." In accordance with the spirit of this command, they are enjoined to have regard to the comfort and welfare, not only of one another, but even of their enemies. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again." Nor was this command to be restricted, as some have supposed, to their brethren of the same nation and religion, for it evidently extended to their personal enemies of whatever country. There was in the Mosaic laws and government as much regard shown to the comfort and the rights of strangers as was compatible with the great ends for which the Hebrews were separated from the surrounding nations. It was not consistent with these ends that any idolatrous rites should be practised among them, and therefore foreigners who acted in this respect in opposition to the laws of the state, could not be allowed to live among them. All strangers, however, who were willing to conform to the laws, by abstaining from practices which they prohibited, were permitted to dwell among the Jews; and the law made provision for the maintenance of their rights: "One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you."

8. To the claims of the poor and the helpless, to the compassion of their brethren, there was benevolent attention shown in the laws of Moses: "When thou dost lend thy brother any thing (Deut. xxiv. 10), thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: in any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down; that he may sleep in his own raiment and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness to thee before the Lord thy God." This law also extended its pro-

tection from oppression to all who were in dependent circumstances, or in a state of servitude. "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee."—"Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take the widow's raiment to pledge: but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee to do this thing. When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot (a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands. When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of the vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing." (Deut. xv. 7.) "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth."

9. Nor are even the lower animals overlooked in the humane provisions of the law of Moses (Deut. xxii. 6). "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee." Again, Deut. xxv. 4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." If we compare these laws with the manners of society at the period in which they were delivered, or, indeed, with the moral code of the most civilized nations, unenlightened by divine revelation, we must be struck with the vast superiority.



10. Nor is the superiority of the laws regarding the duties of justice and veracity less striking. Levit. xix. 11; "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until morning." "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Let these statutes be considered in connexion with the circumstances of the people,—let them be compared with the precepts of philosophers, or with the laws and customs of the surrounding nations, and we shall be furnished with additional evidence of their divine origin.

11. The laws of Moses also, in regard to the prohibition of licentiousness, were remarkable for their purity. That vices of the most licentious nature were practised, sanctioned, and encouraged among ancient nations, every person acquainted with history knows.

12. The superiority of the Mosaic institutions to those of all other ancient nations, is particularly observable in the humane attention which is paid to the rights of all classes of the people. They were wisely adapted to ameliorate, to restrain, or to destroy many of the customs which prevailed among the surrounding nations. Immoral and unjust practices were prohibited; and those principles were inculcated, and that spirit infused into the laws and institutions, which had a direct tendency ultimately to lead to the moral excellence and general improvement in civil society which were aimed at. This latter circumstance, so characteristic of the procedure of the divine government, in the departments of nature and providence which come within our observation, affords abundant evidence of prospective wisdom,—of higher wisdom than belongs to man. We shall now proceed to consider,—

13. (II.) The civil laws of Moses. Of so great importance is the security of our persons, lives, and properties, that the excellence of a government may be estimated by the attention

which is shown to this, and the provision which is made for it. The law of Moses provided for it in the most specific manner, by the equitable administration of justice, and by affording protection alike to every member of the community. The accused had every opportunity of vindicating his innocence, as the trial was public, before men who were selected on the ground of their qualification; and two witnesses at least were required to prove the charge. The perjured person was subjected to the same punishment to which the accused would have been liable if he had been found guilty. No torture was allowed to extort confessions of guilt; and even after conviction, the number of stripes that could be inflicted was restricted to forty.

14. The penal laws of the Mosaic code were peculiarly mild. Death, it is true, was inflicted for some crimes which were not visited by so extreme a punishment by other nations, and hence the Jewish code has been accused of severity; but the fact is, that it punished with death much seldomer than any other nation. The annexing of the penalty of death to the crime of adultery was indeed peculiar to the law of Moses; but the question is, Did the degree of guilt involved in this crime, destructive as it is of the virtue, happiness, and even existence of society, require this capital punishment? Injuries affecting property alone were punished mildly.

15. Several of the crimes capitally punished under the Jewish law were only specified examples of idolatry. But idolatry among the Hebrews was viewed, not only as a violation of the duty which man owes to God, but as a crime of a civil nature, a direct rebellion against the state, a rejection of the authority of their acknowledged sovereign, and an attempt to subvert the foundation of their government, rights, and privileges. As a crime against the state it was of course regarded as high treason; and consequently received the same punishment which in every country follows the attempt to overturn the established constitution.

16. The laws of Moses discovered a humane regard for the protection of persons against the consequences of those feelings of private and family vengeance which they might accidentally awaken. From these feelings arose in other nations the most fatal and long-continued feuds. Among the Jews cities of refuge were provided, to which the manslayer might flee for protection, until a trial was instituted in due form, and his guilt clearly proved.

17. Further; the law of Moses strongly enforced the duties of reverence and obedience to parents; and disobedience was considered as a civil crime. But while it laid great stress on the discharge of these duties, both as right in themselves, and as essential to the wellbeing of society, it enforced them in full consistency with justice and humanity. The parent is not raised to the situation of an absolute despot, nor invested with any such authority as placed the children out of the protection of the laws, as was the case generally among ancient nations. A father, among the Romans, had the power of life and death over his children. He could expose them when infants, which cruel custom prevailed at Rome for many ages, as among other nations; and a newborn infant was not held legitimate, unless the father, or, in his absence, some person for him, lifted it up from the ground and placed it on his bosom; hence *tollere filium*, to educate; *non tollere*, to expose. But even when his children were grown up, he might imprison, scourge, send them bound to work in the country, and also put them to death by any punishment he pleased. Hence a father is called a domestic judge or magistrate by Seneca; and a censor of his son by Suetonius. The condition of a son was in some respects harder than that of a slave. A slave, when sold once, became free; but a son not, unless sold three times. The power of the father was suspended when the son was promoted to any public office, but not extinguished; for it continued not only during the life of the children, but likewise extended to grandchildren. None of them became their own masters till the death of their father and grandfather. But by the law of Moses, the power of the parents, though sometimes exercised with severity, was not arbitrary. The life of the child was in no case dependent on the will of the father: a neutral person was appointed to give judgment, namely, a magistrate.

18. How superior, too, are the laws of the Jewish legislator with respect to slaves, that class of human beings of all others perhaps the most unfortunate! Slavery, even in the most favourable circumstances, must, from the nature of man, be liable to the grossest abuse. The slaves of almost all nations have been left without protection from the cruelty and the lust of their masters. Their comfort and feelings have been disregarded; they have been capriciously subjected to sufferings without limit, and without cause; and their lives have been entirely dependent on the will or suspicion of their proprietors.

At Lacedemon, in whatever manner slaves were treated, they could not claim the protection of the laws. They were subjected annually to a certain number of stripes, although they had not deserved them, merely lest they should forget the duty of obedience. If any one of them looked above his condition by an elegant figure, he was condemned to die, and his master was fined in order that he might by severity prevent his other slaves from offending the eyes of the citizens.

19. In ancient nations generally one-half of the community was doomed to the severest oppressions and sufferings, inflicted without pity or restraint. This was the state of things, not only among barbarous nations, but even among those which boasted of their civilization and refinement, and which we have been accustomed to regard as patterns of polished manners. We find that in the 110th Olympiad there were at Athens twenty thousand citizens, and four hundred thousand slaves; and in the small island of Ægina there were four hundred and seventy thousand slaves. There were private citizens who at one time possessed ten or even twenty thousand.

20. With these facts in our view, let us contemplate the laws of Moses in regard to slavery. The bringing of a fellow-creature into slavery by violence or theft was by these laws punished with death.\* No Israelite could be reduced to this state except by his own consent, or as a punishment for theft of property, for which the criminal was unable to make adequate compensation. The custom of attaching persons to the soil, which prevailed for a long time over the whole world, and which existed even in this country till a late period, was unknown among the Jews. Those who voluntarily became slaves, continued in the servile state only for a limited period; never longer than seven years, when a general release was proclaimed. During the term of servitude an Israelite was not to be regarded in the light of a slave, but as a hired servant for a limited period, at the close of which the most liberal provision was made for his future comfort. "When thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty, thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him."† When we compare this with the laws of ancient and modern states, and consider the period at which it was given, and

\* Exod. xxi. 16.

† Exod. xxi. 1—3; Deut. xv. 12—19.



among what people,—that this law was not only promulgated, but received, submitted to, and generally observed,—does not the difference add confirmation to the claims of Moses to a divine commission?

21. According to the laws of the Hebrew legislator, the slaves that were brought from a foreign country were treated with compassion, and were protected from violence. These generally were captives of war. The right of the master was not absolute; his power was restrained; and the inhumanity and immorality permitted and practised among other nations were prohibited by the law of Moses. The murder of a slave was punished with death. When the slave was treated with improper severity the master was punished. Nay, even the loss of a tooth by the hand of the master was to be followed by immediate freedom. “Thou shalt let him go free for his tooth’s sake.” If a slave from another country should take refuge in the land of Israel, protection was to be given him.\* Marriage with a female slave was as binding as with a free woman; and if she was divorced, it was provided that she should be set at liberty. All who were in the servile condition were instructed in the knowledge of God, were taught to worship him, and to expect his favour and protection: they were to enjoy the rest of the Sabbath as well as their masters. This the law specially enjoined: “That thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt.” The judge was taught to have no respect of persons: freeman and slave were to be the same in his eye; and this was enforced by the consideration that there is no respect of persons with God. “Ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your men-servants, and your maid-servants.”—“Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.”

22. The Mosaic law regarding the lending of money was founded on a principle of brotherly kindness. While the duty of lending was inculcated, all usury from an Israelite was prohibited. “Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury. Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury, but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury.” This law is remarkable, and the reason on which it is founded

\* Deut. xxiii. 15, 16.

is worthy of notice; especially as it was during a long period deemed binding upon Christians. As the Jews lived by agriculture, it was presumed that they had no need of money unless they were in poverty. It was not with them as in modern times, or even as it was in some of the nations that bordered upon Palestine, among whom money could be employed to advantage in commercial speculation, so as to enable the borrower to pay interest for it. If the Jews had occasion to borrow money, it was not for the purpose of embarking in mercantile enterprise, but for the immediate uses of life; and to demand or to accept usury in such a case was opposed to the feeling of brotherly kindness which the Jews were commanded to entertain towards each other. This law, while it naturally arose out of the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, and as naturally became void with a change of circumstances, was admirably calculated to cherish those fraternal affections which it was a leading design of the Hebrew legislator to promote. The law extended to proselytes to the Jewish religion as well as to the natural descendants of Abraham.

23. With regard to the military laws of the Jews, I have to remark, that those who object to them as inhuman and barbarous are not always candid in giving a just view of the state of manners in the early times in which these laws were enacted. If we decide the question as to the justice and utility of the military laws of the Jews, without adverting to the very different circumstances in which we and they are placed, we are not likely to come to a fair and impartial judgment. For, "there is not a more copious source of error among men," as an historian of great authority has remarked, "than to decide concerning the institutions and manners of past ages by the forms and ideas which prevail in their own time." If we consider the state of manners, and the usages according to which war was conducted at the time when Moses lived, we find from the representations of Homer, and other writers, that mankind were in a state of almost constant warfare; that those who were unable to protect themselves were plundered and oppressed; and that slavery was generally the happiest lot to which these unfortunate persons could attain. The conqueror was not restricted by any law to moderation and clemency, or prevented from exercising the most cruel severities on the vanquished. Their lives and property were at his

disposal; and it was seldom that either age or sex could soften his ferocity, or stay his indiscriminate slaughter.

24. By the laws of Moses the Jews were prohibited from entering upon war with the view of aggrandizing their nation; or from motives of pride and avarice. The language of their legislator on this subject is remarkably explicit: and the Jews, during many ages, generally acted in conformity with the principles prescribed. A tender regard to the interests and to the comfort of all the members of the community was remarkably shown in the ordinances of Moses respecting war. "The officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another dedicate it. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not eaten of it? let him also go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her."\*

25. The law regarding the treatment of besieged cities when taken, is more humane than any similar law or usage of any other nation at that time. No indiscriminate slaughter was permitted; and though the peculiar circumstances of the devoted nations of Canaan gave to the procedure of the Jews the appearance of severity, it will be found that the rules prescribed to them by their legislator restricted them, in all ordinary warfare, to great clemency and moderation. "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, that if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, shalt thou take unto thyself."† Respecting this law, it is to be observed, that it was restrictive, and not imperative. It was designed to restrain the ferocity natural to soldiers in the circumstances supposed, and to prevent them from putting any of even the males to death who

\* Deut. xx. 5—8.

† Deut. xx. 10—16.

submitted. By the law of Moses none under twenty years of age were to go forth to battle; and no one under this age was numbered among the males. The law was humanely intended to prevent the Jews from imitating the practice of the surrounding nations, who were accustomed, on such occasions, to indiscriminate and cruel slaughter.

26. I have already noticed the humanity of the law respecting prisoners of war, especially females. "When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldst have her to thy wife; then thou shalt bring her home to thine house, and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her."

27. If we review what has now been advanced concerning the civil and military laws enjoined by Moses, and compare the spirit that pervades them with the laws and practices of antiquity, we cannot fail to be impressed with the astonishing dissimilarity and superiority. To fix our attention on one of the examples alluded to, the relation of master and slave, the law on this head may be advantageously contrasted with the laws and usages, not only of the ancient world, but of modern Europe, in regard to the same subject. After how long a period were laws similar to those of the Jewish code introduced into our own country, and with how much difficulty were they, or are they, maintained in force! The admired nations of Greece and Rome practised cruelties and oppressions: the master among them was a tyrant, and the slaves were completely under his power, whom he could torture or put to death at his pleasure, or for his amusement. They were frequently confined to subterranean dungeons; compelled to till the ground in chains; to suffer every injury without even the hope of redress; and were objects of cruelty alike to the master and to all around him. They were viewed in the same light, and treated in the same manner, as the beasts that perish. Their death was considered merely as the loss sustained



by their master. If their evidence was at any time taken, it was almost always accompanied with torture; and if the master happened to be killed, many or all of the slaves were immediately murdered. The youth of Sparta frequently lay in ambush for the Helots, and killed thousands of them in cold blood.

28. Turn from these abominations to the laws of Moses, and, how extraordinary is the difference! It is the difference between light and darkness, between moral excellency and the basest turpitude and cruelty. But to what is this astonishing superiority in the laws of Moses to be ascribed? We can account for it only by admitting that he was under the infallible guidance of God,—that he spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

29. Especially is this conviction impressed on our minds, when we consider the beauty of the religious and social principles recognised and inculcated by these laws, in contrast with the sentiments and manners of the people to whom they were addressed. “Now, this singular contrast between the sacred literature of that nation and the character of the nation itself, is precisely what we might expect to find, provided their alleged history be the true one. A system of laws emanating from Heaven must necessarily be supposed to be consistent with the soundest principles of virtue and holiness. But it by no means follows that the habits of a semi-barbarous people would immediately conform to the restraints imposed. The accuracy of the picture afforded us by Moses is, according to the presumption of the inspired character of his writings, perfectly correct. But how are we to explain the difficulty, if we deny that inspiration?”\*

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THE MEANS BY WHICH THE MOSAIC AND CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS ARE UNITED.

1. THERE are some leading circumstances and peculiarities by which the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian dispensations are prominently united. These meet in Christ;—in his personal manifestation in human form, in his sacrifice, offices, and salvation. The whole system of divine truth, as taught under the different dispensations, is connected together.

\* Consistency of Revelation, by Dr. Shuttleworth, p. 116.

2. (I.) By the personal manifestation of the Son of God in human form. It is perfectly evident that he often appeared in this form under the Old Testament dispensation. It is supposed, on probable grounds, that it was he who addressed our first parents immediately after the fall; who, on that occasion, made known to them the Mighty Deliverer who should afterwards be born into the world; and who taught them, by the use of typical sacrifice, then instituted, the way in which the justice of God was to be satisfied, and the consequences of their transgression averted. He repeatedly appeared, under the title of the Angel of Jehovah, to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Concerning the former of these it is said, that Jehovah appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre. While he sat in the door of his tent, in the heat of the day, according to the simplicity of ancient times, he beheld three persons in human form stand by him. One of these he addresses as his Lord, and he earnestly intercedes with him on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain. This celestial visitant is denominated Jehovah, and he speaks and acts like the supreme and self-existing God. This divine Person, who, from the fall, took upon himself the care of his redeemed church and people, appeared also to Isaac, and renewed to him the promises which were made to his Father Abraham: "I will be with thee and bless thee; for unto thee, and to thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware to Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

3. Jacob, in like manner, when he fled from Esau his brother, and journeyed towards Padan-aram, beheld in vision this angel of Jehovah's presence. When the sun was set he found himself in the solitude of the wilderness, far from the habitations of men. There was here presented to his view a symbolical representation of the mediation of the promised deliverer, whose efficacious intercession should again open those heavens which the offences of mankind had shut, and who, by his atoning sacrifice, should reconcile all things unto himself. He beheld a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and the angels of God ascended and descended on it. And behold the Lord stood above it, and said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac.

I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." That the person who is here styled the Lord God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, is the same as is elsewhere called the Angel of Jehovah, and the Angel of the covenant, we learn from Jacob himself. On his deathbed he alludes in these words to the fulfilment of the promises which were made to him at Bethel, and to the person by whom these promises were made: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who fed me all my life long unto this day; the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." The prophet Hosea, referring to another manifestation of the same divine Person to Jacob while on his way returning from Mesopotamia, says, "that by his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed, even Jehovah the God of hosts." It thus appears that the heavenly messenger who appeared to the patriarchs in the form of man was Jehovah himself,—the same who was afterwards described as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.

4. Moses, the founder of the dispensation of the law, received his commission from this divine Person. After he had remained in retirement many years, he beheld, while feeding the flock of Jethro, in Horeb, a thicket burning with fire. When he turned aside to see this great sight, why the bush was not burned, he saw the angel of God in the midst of the flaming bush. Yet we do not proceed far with the narrative till we find this angel of God styled Jehovah; and he addresses Moses in the character of the supreme and living God. When Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Moreover he said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God."

5. Thus did Moses receive his commission, as the deliverer and the legislator of the Hebrews, from the angel of Jehovah, the God of the patriarchs. This divine Person, when Israel left Egypt, went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them by the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give

them light. He is denominated Jehovah, and the angel of the Lord; and is evidently the Son of God, who in the fulness of time assumed not merely the form, but the very nature of man. The prophet Isaiah refers to him in the following remarkable language: "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. Surely they are my people, children that will not lie. So he was their Saviour. In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and carried them, all the days of old."

6. The divine person who is thus spoken of as the angel of the presence of Jehovah, and to whom is attributed the work of conducting Israel through the wilderness, often appeared to Moses in human form, and familiarly conversed with him. Under the appellation of Jehovah, we are told that he spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. Remarkable, also, is the language in which God the Father describes the character and properties of this divine Person whom he was to send before Israel to bring them into the promised land: "Behold, I send the angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries; for mine angel shall go before thee and bring thee in. Go now, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine angel shall go before thee." This language is inapplicable to any mere creature, however exalted, and can only refer to Him who declared that He and the Father are one. The angel of the Lord is said to pardon transgression; but who can forgive sins but God alone? Does it not therefore follow that the angel of the Lord is God?

7. This divine person appeared afterwards to Joshua as the Captain of the hosts of the Lord,—to the people at Bochim, where he charged them with their rebellions against him. He manifested himself in the form of man to Manoah and his wife, to whose inquiry respecting his name he replied, Why askest



thou thus after my name, seeing it is wonderful? When he vanished out of their sight, and ascended to heaven in the flame of the sacrifice, we are told that Manoah then knew that he was the angel of the Lord. "And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If Jehovah were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

8. Thus, the divine person who is called the angel of the Lord, founded and conducted the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations; and as under these dispensations he often appeared in the form of man, so, when he was to introduce the last and the most perfect economy, he really took upon him human nature, and exercised among men the prophetic, the regal, and the priestly offices. He was God manifest in the flesh: while equal in essence with the Father, from whom he came forth, he truly possessed the nature of man; yet, in this nature, his glory was beheld as the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth. Though he generally appeared, as he often did of old, as a mere man, who possessed all the properties of sinless humanity, he also occasionally manifested himself, as he did before his incarnation, with effulgent majesty. He appeared in glory to the view of his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was also clothed with awful splendour on the day of his ascension. After the heavens had received him in the human nature which he had assumed, his glory was seen by Saul as he journeyed to Damascus, as a light above the brightness of the sun. Even that disciple whom Jesus peculiarly loved, and who was so highly privileged as to lean upon his bosom in the days of his humiliation, when in Patmos he beheld him in divine majesty, fell at his feet as one dead. At the close of the present dispensation, the angel of Jehovah, who, from the beginning, took upon himself the guidance of his church,—who became incarnate for its redemption, will appear in ineffable glory, accompanied with myriads of mighty angels. He shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, seated on that great white throne, from before which the heavens and the earth shall flee away, and there shall be found no place for them.

9. (II.) The old and the new dispensations are connected not only by the personal manifestation of Christ, but by

numerous prefigurations of his offices, sacrifice, and salvation. The great facts and doctrines of Christianity were made known to the Jews through the medium of typical representation. The Mosaic economy in this way answered the twofold purpose of communicating the knowledge of salvation to those who lived under it, and of being subservient by its typical institutions and characters to the more perfect dispensation of the gospel.

10. In the first place, the divinely instituted rites of the Jewish worship had a designed reference to Christianity. The ordinance of sacrifice, which appears to have been enjoined immediately after the fall, was the chief of these. This institution, though observed by all heathen nations, was by them all perverted to superstitious purposes. But Israel, when separated from every other people, were commanded to practise it according to a prescribed ritual, as a memorial of the guilt and pollution of man, and an emblem of the means by which the redemption of the human race was to be procured. It was intended to give a lively representation of the substitution and death of Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and upon whom the Father laid the iniquities of us all.

11. Accordingly, when a sacrifice was to be offered up by the priest, the form prescribed by the law required that the person on whose behalf it was devoted, or some other in his stead, should lay his hands upon the head of the victim, and confess his iniquities. The guilt of the sinful individual was supposed to be thus transferred to the guiltless animal given in sacrifice; and its consequences were in this way averted from the sinner, who was absolved from the charges laid against him. In like manner, the sins of his people were imputed to the great Saviour and Surety; the debt due to divine justice was exacted, and he was made answerable; and he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

12. While this doctrine was set forth by all the sacrifices for sin which were offered under the law, it was exhibited with striking significancy in the ceremonial of the scape-goat on the day of annual atonement. On this occasion, the high priest, arrayed in his pontifical habits, was commanded to take two kids of the goats for a sin-offering, and to present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle. After the presentation he was to cast lots upon them, one lot for the Lord,

and the other lot for the scape-goat. The goat upon which the lot of the Lord fell was to be offered up for a sin-offering; but the goat on which the lot fell to be the scape-goat was to be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him by letting him go into the wilderness. The high priest was to carry the blood of the former within the veil, to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat, in order that atonement might be made for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel; but on the head of the live goat he was to lay both his hands, and to confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, putting them upon the head of the goat, after which he was to send it away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, that it might bear upon it all their iniquities into a land not inhabited.

13. In like manner, the institution of the passover was intended to typify the same great doctrines of human redemption. This is explicitly assumed by the apostle Paul, who asserts, that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Accordingly, there is here an exact correspondence between the type and the antitype. Each family was ordered to slay a lamb, to take its blood, and sprinkle it upon the lintel and door-posts of their dwelling-places, that when, at midnight, the angel proceeded to destroy the first-born of the Egyptians, he might pass them over, and exempt them from the awful calamity. Is it not in a similar way that the blood of Christ, which has satisfied divine justice, averts the punishment of transgression from sinful man? Are not they only safe from the wrath to come who have fled to this the refuge set before us? The paschal lamb, which is declared to have been a type of Christ, was slain in sacrifice; and are we not commanded to behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world? Are we not taught to believe that he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet-smelling savour; that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for us? The paschal lamb, after being slain, was roasted with fire,—a circumstance in which was impressively set forth the fiery wrath that Christ endured, both in the garden of Gethsemane and upon the cross. Concerning the paschal lamb, it was enjoined that not a bone should be broken; and the evangelist, after mentioning the particulars of the

death of Christ, says, "These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken."

14. I shall advert to only one other example more to illustrate the position, that the institutions of the Mosaic ritual prefigured the work, sacrifice, and salvation of Christ. According to that ritual, the distinction of animals into clean and unclean, which appears to have obtained from the first appointment of sacrifice, the Jews were enjoined carefully to observe. They were to abstain from the use of certain animals in food, as they were also prohibited from offering them up in sacrifice. This distinction was designed to signify the purity of all who are consecrated to the worship and service of God; and the uncleanness of the worshippers of idols, and of all who are under the guilt and pollution of sin. Accordingly, the most striking view which is given of Messiah's reign is that in which the distinction alluded to is represented as ceasing, and a wonderful change is effected in the dispositions of the most savage animals. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

15. This beautiful representation of gospel times, which assumes the abolition of the Jewish ritual, began to receive its fulfilment when the apostle Peter saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air: in consequence of this vision he went and preached the gospel to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. From that time forward, repentance and the remission of sins were to be announced in the name of Christ among all nations, for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

16. Thus does it appear, that the author, the nature, and the blessed effects of human redemption, were made known



from the fall of man, and more especially by the typical ordinances of the Mosaic economy during the long period of its continuance. But when this dispensation had accomplished its chief design as preparatory to the gospel; when the fulness of time was come, the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, and verified in himself, and by his obedience and sufferings, all that had been prefigured concerning him in the various ordinances of the law. He appeared for salvation to the ends of the earth: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.

17. (III.) The leading characters and events of the old dispensation are typical representations of the Redeemer's life, office, and blissful reign. The providence of God, without interfering with the free agency of man, so directed and overruled the principal circumstances in the history of his people, as to become typical prophecies of the peculiar facts and characters of the gospel dispensation. The sovereign Lord and Ruler of the universe selected a people from the nations, to be the depositaries of the knowledge of himself, and of the promises respecting the Redeemer; and he so ordered, that the remarkable features in their history, during many ages, should furnish typical instruction concerning the nature and properties of human redemption,—the incarnation, the humiliation, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. The persons immediately concerned in the production of these events were following out their own views, and were unconscious at the time of the high purpose which they subserved in relation to future ages. But their lives, under the direction of Providence, were constituted typical signs, by which they announced to distant generations the grace that was to come unto them by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow.

18. Is it possible to examine with attention the statements now made, without being convinced that the plan which God has formed for the recovery and final happiness of the human race is that which is exhibited with such perfect consistency in the sacred Scriptures? How could such entire harmony pervade the several parts of the system which is there presented, composed as they have been in different and distant ages, and under dissimilar dispensations, unless they had all emanated from Him who knows the end from the beginning? Does not the survey which we have taken irresistibly lead us

to this conclusion, "that the dispensation of the gospel was in preparation ever since the fall of man; and that the institutions established among the Jews were originally designed to transmit to us, by many unconscious and many unwilling witnesses, the most animated images and anticipations both of the substance and of the effects of Christianity,—glorious monuments, raised on the history of the world, of the manifold wisdom and grace of God, hid from ages and generations, and now made manifest to the saints?" \*

\* Moncreiff on the Evidence of the Jewish and Christian Revelation, p. 123.

## BOOK V.

ON THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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### CHAPTER I.

ON THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD.

1. THE Mosaic economy was established and maintained by mighty signs and wonders, wrought in confirmation of the mission of Moses and of the prophets. The gospel dispensation was also introduced by numerous miraculous works. So numerous and beneficial were the miracles of Jesus, that the multitudes were astonished, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. His mode of performing his mighty works was peculiar to himself. While Moses and the prophets wrought miracles in the name of the God of Israel, and while the apostles performed them in the name of Jesus, he exerted miraculous power from himself, without reference to any other. He claimed the possession of all power in heaven and in earth; and in a manner accordant with the sovereign dominion of the Lord of the universe, he controlled by his word the raging of the sea, he stilled the roar of the tempest, he called the dead to life, he unstopped the ears of the deaf, he opened the eyes of the blind, he communicated health and vigour to the withered limb, and he restored to the possession of reason the distracted mind. It cannot be questioned that the real performance of these works as indubitably attests the validity of his claim to a divine character, and to be a divine messenger,—as the transcendent grandeur, the inimitable beauty, the endless variety, the perfect harmony and utility of the works of nature, prove the wisdom and goodness of that God in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

2. Restricting myself at present to a brief consideration of the nature, number, and design of the miracles which were wrought by our Lord, I observe,—

(1.) That he manifestly performed them for the noblest purpose. The end pursued was not worldly aggrandizement, either in regard to himself or his followers: no advantage of this nature was either sought for or obtained in consideration of his wonderful works. With a purity and dignity of

character suited to his high claims, he lived apart from the fading glory and grandeur of the world. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head." He who commanded the elements, who suspended or reversed at pleasure the established constitution of nature, who generously healed all manner of diseases among the people, was himself in poverty, and declared that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. When he sent forth his disciples, and gave them power to work miracles, he prohibited them from receiving any compensation for the wonderful deeds which they were authorized to perform. "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

3. As the end for which our Lord and his apostles wrought miracles was not selfish, so neither were the doctrines which these miracles were designed to support, calculated to flatter the prejudices and the passions of those to whom they were addressed. They neither soothed the superstitions of the populace, nor favoured the political schemes of the turbulent and ambitious. No persons of rank and power felt it to be their advantage to support their credit by their influence and authority. They were opposed to the fondly cherished expectations of the Jews, and they were repulsive to the pride, the impurity, and the vanity of the Gentiles. To the former, they proved a stumbling-block, and to the latter, foolishness. Their author was reproached as a Galilean; he was despised and rejected of men; and condemned to suffer an ignominious death.

4. The great design for which our Lord wrought miracles was beneficent and sublime: it was to attest by the seal of heaven his own divine mission, and consequently to prove the divine authority of the doctrines which he taught. These doctrines are worthy of the holiness and wisdom of God, commend themselves by their infinite excellency to the unprejudiced reason and conscience of every man, and convey relief for the wants, and answers to the urgent inquiries, of the human race. They give certain information concerning the character of God, and the immortal destination of man; the nature and origin of his moral ruin, and the perfection of the remedy provided by infinite wisdom and mercy, on principles honourable to the divine government; the relations which he



sustains, the obligations and duties involved in these relations, and the powerful inducements to their performance. In a word, the design of Christ in working miracles was to prove the reality of that system of communication between God and mankind, established from the creation,—that plan of redeeming mercy, which was obscurely exhibited at the dawn of divine revelation, which was gradually unfolded by the ministry of prophets during the antediluvian, the patriarchal, and the Mosaic dispensations, and which having been completed in the sacrifice of the Redeemer, and extending to the consummation of all things, is to stretch in its mighty results through the ages of eternity. This was a purpose, the greatest and the most beneficent that can be conceived, worthy of the special interposition of God, and in accordance with the holy and heavenly character of Christ.

5. (II.) The miracles which Jesus wrought corresponded in their nature to the benevolence and grandeur of this purpose. They were characterised by beneficence and greatness. In general they were performed in compliance with earnest entreaty; and in answering the solicitations addressed to him, Jesus showed his compassion and sensibility as well as his divine power. This compassion is shown in union with true greatness; and in some instances it is manifested like the goodness of the Creator surmounting the obstacles to its exercise. Though it is not necessary to illustrate this position, I cannot but notice the beautiful discovery of tenderness and compassion which took place in regard to the ruler, whose only daughter lay at the point of death, and expired before his arrival. The natural feeling of a parent, anxious for the recovery of an only child, leads him to prostrate himself at the feet of Jesus, and with importunate entreaty to implore his interposition. “He fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his house; for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the master. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not; believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the house, all wept and bewailed her; but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he took her by the hand, and called, saying,

Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and he commanded to give her meat."

6. A similar example of benevolence and greatness occurs in the case of the centurion, who came unto him beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. This person, a Gentile and a Roman, had by the excellency of his conduct endeared himself to the Jewish people. The elders of the Jews, the sacred historian informs us, came on this occasion to Jesus on his behalf, and besought him, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. The tender interest which this centurion felt in his servant, and his anxiety for his recovery, form amiable features in his character. Residing, as he seems to have done, at Capernaum, or in its immediate neighbourhood, he must have heard much of the miracles and doctrines of Christ; and having formed exalted conceptions of his power and dignity, he had hoped that, by his merciful interposition, the servant who was dear to him might be recovered from the painful and dangerous malady with which he was affected. With his views of the character of Christ, he was probably surprised by his kindness and condescension in complying so readily with his request; and sensible of personal unworthiness, and that his house, the abode of a Gentile, was unfit to receive a divine messenger, he even attempted to dissuade our Lord from making the visit. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

7. The faith which he thus discovered in the sacred character and mighty power of Christ, did homage to the reality of the evidence by which our Lord proved his divine mission; and, accordingly, Jesus expresses his approbation of that unwavering faith which, though it honoured him so highly, did not honour him more highly than was due. He tells the centurion, in consoling and encouraging terms, that his servant was healed. He said unto him, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee: and his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

8. It is unnecessary to explain this particular by detailing the beautiful and striking examples of benevolence exhibited in the restoration to life of the widow of Nain's son, and of Lazarus. In these, Jesus showed the tenderest compassion, and the most exquisite sensibility, in union with a greatness and majesty corresponding to his claims as the Son of God. During the years in which he had exercised his ministry, he proved himself to be the Saviour and friend of man, not by exerting his mighty power in performing works of severity and terror, but by removing and alleviating human misery in all its forms. His interpositions were miracles of mercy: and of the great number recorded in the New Testament, there are only two which seem to be of an opposite description, namely, his suffering the demons to enter the herd of swine, in consequence of which the whole herd perished in the waters, and his causing the barren fig-tree to wither away. I need not occupy time by mentioning the important reasons which rendered severity in these two instances proper. Yet it is obvious that it was exercised, not on human beings, but on the inferior animals, and on the inanimate creation; and it was employed for the purpose of conveying salutary instruction, through the medium of impressive and awakening signs. His words and his works indicated the most perfect good-will to man; and while he was miraculously feeding the hungry, healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead, he was at once proving his divine authority, and furnishing a striking illustration of the avowed design of his mission, which was, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

9. (III.) The miracles which Jesus wrought were real, and could not have been produced by natural causes. They were deviations from the established laws of nature, and could have been performed only by divine power. This may be confidently inferred from the fact, that though the ministry of Jesus continued between three and four years, and though, during the whole of that time, he went about doing good, healing every infirmity of the people, every one who applied to him, and many who did not apply, were cured. No man can be so ignorant of the fixed constitution of things as not to know that this could not be the effect of the operation of natural causes. For without deciding the question, whether all of them were naturally incurable or not, all must admit that a work is miraculous when it can be effected only by creative

power. Will any one doubt whether such power is requisite to feed thousands with a few small loaves and fishes, so that the fragments left should greatly exceed the original quantity of the food: To walk on the sea, and command the tempest to cease: To call the dead from their graves, and reunite the spiritual principle to their lifeless bodies: To cause, by the utterance of a word, the lame to walk, and the blind to see?

10. But even when an event considered by itself is natural, that is, may be produced by natural causes, it may be denominated miraculous, on account of the manner of its performance. "That a sick person should be restored to health, is not, when considered singly, preternatural; but that health should be restored at the command of another, undoubtedly is."—"If a person," says Mr. Hume, "claiming a divine authority, should command a sick person to be well, a healthful man to fall down dead, the clouds to pour rain, the winds to blow; in short, should order many natural events, which immediately follow on his command; these might be justly esteemed miracles, because they are really, in this case, contrary to the laws of nature:—because nothing can be more contrary to nature, than that the voice or command of a man should have such an influence."

11. Now, the miracles of our Lord were instantaneously performed, without any instrumentality whatever. The most inveterate diseases were removed by a word, and sometimes without it. He commanded the blind to see, the lame to walk, the tempest to be stilled, and the dead to rise; and the greatness of his power was immediately seen in the existence of the desired event. With the ease and dignity corresponding to his claims as a divine Being, who possessed all power in heaven and on earth, he continually accomplished his mighty and most merciful purposes. So instantaneously and universally was his word followed with miraculous effect, that the multitudes who resorted to him were amazed, and said, What thing is this! for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him: Let him speak only, and it shall be done: Let me but touch the hem of his garment, and I shall be made whole. Like the sovereign Lord of the universe, he moved about, suspending, controlling, and changing the laws and elements of nature at pleasure, without any emblem or instrument of the energy by which he effected his many wonderful works. As at the fiat of the Almighty the



creation sprung into existence; so, when he spake, it was done, when he commanded, it stood fast. With the same readiness he revealed the best-concealed thoughts of the human heart, or called the dead into being; regulated the movements of the inhabitants of the sea, or walked himself upon its billows.

12. There are only three apparent exceptions to the rule observed by our Lord, of instantaneously effecting the miracle intended without the intervention of means or instruments: those of the blind man at Jerusalem, another near Bethsaida, and the deaf man nigh the sea of Galilee. In the first of these cases, Jesus spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and commanded him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam; the man went and washed, and returned seeing. In the second case, he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town, and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up, and he was restored, and he saw every man clearly; and he sent him away to his own house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town. In regard to the deaf man, who had an impediment in his speech, our Lord put his fingers into his ears, and spit and touched his tongue, and, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened; and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

13. But the means used in these instances were fitted rather to impair than to restore sight. Why were they at all employed in these cases, and in these only? Obviously to furnish evidence to the perfect senses of the individuals on whom the miracles were performed, that Jesus was the person to whom they were indebted for their recovery, and to enable them to state to others the grounds of this assurance fully and circumstantially. We find, accordingly, that the first of these individuals, the man who was born blind, employed this information to great advantage, when interrogated by the rulers concerning the person who had caused him to see. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. After they had examined his parents, and were by them assured that this their son was born blind, they farther questioned

him as to his opinion of the character of Jesus: he unanswerably replied, and affirmed from the miracle of which he was the subject, the divine mission of Christ: "Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Since the world began was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

14. (IV.) The miracles of Christ were addressed to the senses, and performed in the presence of multitudes, openly and publicly. They did not consist of abstractions and mysteries, removed from common observation, which the bulk of mankind were incapable of understanding, and to which, therefore, their testimony was incompetent. They related to matters and objects with which human beings, in all ages and in all circumstances, are necessarily familiar,—to sickness and health, emaciation and vigour, the imperfection or the entire absence of some of the corporeal senses, the use of limbs, and the partial or total want of them; the difference between the body of man after life has been extinguished, and when animated and living; the distinction between abstinence from food, and a full and plentiful participation of it. It only requires that we possess the faculties, corporeal and mental, characteristic of human beings, to be capable of judging accurately, and of deciding with infallible certainty, concerning such things as these.

15. The miracles of our Lord were not only palpable matters of fact, but they were openly and publicly performed before numerous witnesses. They were wrought during years, and exhibited before many thousands, who wanted neither the inclination nor the power to expose them as impostures, had they been capable of doing so. A leper was healed before the great multitude who had listened to the Sermon on the Mount. The widow of Nain's son was restored to life before the mourners who accompanied the bier, and many other spectators. The man with the withered hand was cured in the synagogue, in the presence of some of Christ's bitterest and most powerful enemies. There were on one occasion four, and on another five thousand, who were miraculously fed by a few loaves and fishes. There were present at the resurrection of Lazarus many besides the friends and relatives of the deceased. In a word, the great majority of the inhabitants of the cities, towns, and villages of Judea, among whom were the

powerful and implacable enemies of Christ, men of rank, influence, and learning, were witnesses of the miraculous power of Jesus. The reality and the number of the miracles were universally acknowledged; so that the Jewish rulers, when appealed to, neither denied, nor attempted to deny, the truth of the facts; "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

16. (V.) The miracles of Christ were in number and in variety suited to the divine character and mission of Christ. Besides those which are fully recorded in the Gospels, it is evident from the multitudes who everywhere resorted to Christ, as well as from the attested fact that none ever applied to him in vain, that his miracles were in number very great. He healed all manner of sickness and of disease, every diversity of bodily and mental infirmity. He exerted his mighty power upon the animate and inanimate creation, upon the winds, the waves, and the elements, on the body and on the mind of man, on the corporeal frame in all its stages of mortal existence, and upon this frame after the process of decomposition had commenced in the darkness of the tomb. He wrought this variety of miracles from the beginning of his ministry till its close, from the time when by his command water was changed into wine, till by his word he healed the ear of the servant of the high-priest, which had been cut off by the rashness of one of his disciples. Nor did the series of mighty works performed in attestation of his divine character and mission stop here. They were continued till the termination of his painful and ignominious sufferings. The sun was darkened, the earth trembled, rocks were rent, and many of the dead were raised; so that the number and variety of miracles effected by Christ, and wrought in attestation of his high claims, correspond to the dignity of his character as the Son of God, sent to our world on an embassy of mercy. He performed them all without ostentation, with the retiring modesty, simplicity, and majesty, becoming the high original which he claimed, and the divine power which he exercised.

17. (VI.) The miracles of the Redeemer were designedly illustrative of the religion which he taught, and the mediatorial character and office which he sustained. The avowed and the primary end of his coming into the world was to save mankind from the guilt, dominion, and consequences of sin.

He himself thus describes the objects of his mission in the synagogue of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."—As our Lord taught by his doctrines and his parables these glorious purposes of his mission; and as the purity and the transcendent dignity of his character were in unison with these designs; so he contrived that the miracles which he wrought, at least in many instances, should figuratively express the same truths.

18. Thus he miraculously restored the blind to sight. He gives spiritual illumination also. He is the light of the world, and dispels the mental and moral darkness of all who believe on him. In this sense he continues to open the blind eyes, and to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

19. He removed the most loathsome and contaminating diseases from the body. In like manner he saves from the pollution of sin. And as his power and compassion were proved in the former case, so will all who apply to him experience his redeeming power and mercy in regard to the latter. He cast out demons from those who in the days of his personal ministry were afflicted with them: and in this way he has impressively taught us that he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; and that he delivers his people from the power and bondage of sin and Satan. He raised the dead to life; and he has thus shown us that he will raise from the grave all who believe on him, to the enjoyment of everlasting life. In the days of his flesh he commanded the dead to rise: "But marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation."

20. And as by his mighty power he reanimated the body that had been cold in death, so does he quicken the soul that is dead in sin. As he gave proofs of his power to accomplish the former, so did he claim the prerogative of effecting the latter. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."



21. (VII.) In every instance the success of Christ and of his apostles, in their miraculous works, was instantaneous and complete. The word was no sooner uttered than the work was done. There was no such thing as a failure amid successful attempts. Although the ministry of our Lord lasted upwards of three years,—although during that period multitudes resorted to him seeking his miraculous aid,—it is affirmed by those who were eyewitnesses,—and admitted by enemies,—that “he healed them all.” Nor is there in the long career of his apostles a single case mentioned in which an applicant was denied miraculous interposition.\* With regard to Christ, in addition to the numerous cases specifically recorded, it is said, that “his fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them.” And of the apostles we are told, that “there came a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one.”

22. (VIII.) The miracles of our Lord and of his apostles underwent a rigid examination at the time when they were wrought. It has already been observed, that they were performed in the presence of multitudes openly and publicly, who had every opportunity of scrutinizing their character. When we consider that they had against them the power of the magistrate, the force of public opinion, the authority of

\* “It is necessary,” says Dr. Lardner, “when a miracle is wrought for the proof of the character or divine mission of any person, that it appear to be done by him, and not to be a casual thing. It has been common, therefore, for all the prophets and extraordinary messengers of God to make use of some external action at the same time that they performed a miracle, though that external action was in itself of no real virtue. When the Red sea was to be opened to give a passage for the children of Israel, God said to Moses, ‘Lift up thy rod, and stretch thine hand over the sea, and divide it. And when they had passed through, God said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians.’ The stretching the hand did not divide the sea, but the divine power that accompanied that action. Nevertheless the action was of great use to convince the people that the dividing or returning of the waters, which immediately followed thereupon, was not a casual natural event, but that God was with Moses their leader. The same thing may be said of any other external actions made use of by Moses or other ancient prophets. Jesus, in like manner, when he intended a miracle, sometimes laid his hands on the person to be cured, or else said, Be thou clean, Be thou healed, or some such other words; that the people might be assured that the cure was wrought by him, and might believe that God had sent him. At Lazarus’ grave a loud voice was not improper, when there was by a great multitude of people.” (Lard. W. Ed. 1815, p. 356.)

the established religion, and the prejudices and partialities of the multitude, we may have the most perfect certainty that they were strictly examined. If the religion in support of which they were performed prevailed, Judaism must be abolished, and paganism, in all its varieties, destroyed; and hence the bitter opposition of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The multiplication of miracles and increase of disciples only roused still more their hostility, and called into active exercise all their powers of ingenuity and diligence to detect imposture, had any existed,—to prove, if that had been possible, that the miracles were false. But after this investigation had continued for a series of years, and had been conducted by many thousands who were eye-witnesses,—by men of learning and talent,—by men in all ranks of life, it was universally admitted that the miracles of the gospel are real.

23. (IX.) They were published and appealed to immediately after, and in the very places where they were said to have been performed. This is a test which no other miracles but those that have been wrought in attestation of divine revelation can stand. The miracles of Christ were recorded and published to the world about the eighth year after the death of our Lord in the Gospel by Matthew. But we know that during their occurrence they were sufficiently notorious. The raising of Lazarus to life was so widely published at Bethany, where it took place, that “much people of the Jews came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.” We find the apostles Peter and John appeal to the multitude, in whose presence the impotent man at the gate of the temple had been made whole, for the reality of the miracle. “His name,” said they, “through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness *in the presence of you all.*” A few days after the resurrection of our Lord did his apostles proclaim this great miracle which forms the basis of Christianity; while, at the same time, they appealed to the Jewish people as witnesses of the numerous miracles which Jesus had wrought among them. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him *in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.*”

24. (X.) Christ, at all times, wrought his miracles as of his own power, and in his own name. This is a peculiarity which ought to be specially noticed, as it showed an absolute and sovereign power over the course of nature. No mere prophet or apostle ever pretended to this. They ascribed the miracles which they wrought, not to their own power, but to that of God. They who came to Christ that he might work miracles for them, were required to believe that by his own power he was able to do what they asked. "Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.—My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." From Him his disciples received power to work miracles, which they always performed in the name of Christ.

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## CHAPTER II.

### ILLUSTRATION OF THE EVIDENCE OF MIRACLES.

1. THE miraculous works which were to announce the arrival and characterise the age of the Messiah, had been fully described in the Old Testament Scriptures many centuries before the coming of Christ. When we find Jesus, as the prophets had foretold, healing the sick, causing the blind to receive their sight, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the lepers to be cleansed, and raising the dead to life; and when also we witness the fulfilment of ancient prophecy in the line of his descent, the time and place of his birth, the circumstances of his life, and the manner of his death, we have the strongest grounds on which our faith may rest, while we believe that in Jesus of Nazareth we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.

2. The dispensation which He introduced was attested and established by numerous miracles. Deviations from the established laws of nature took place at his birth and at his baptism, when he was transfigured on the mount, and when angels ministered to him in the garden of Gethsemane, when, during his ministry, he so extensively performed those mighty works which no man can do except God be with him; they also signalized his crucifixion, when the sun was darkened, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the rocks were torn asunder, and the earth trembled;—his glorious resurrection from the dead, when the angel of the Lord descended from heaven with a great earthquake, and rolled away the stone from the

sepulchre, and sat on it,—whose countenance was like lightning, which made the keepers to quake as dead men; his triumphant ascension into heaven before many witnesses, to whom, as they steadfastly looked to their ascending Lord, two celestial visitants had said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Miraculous works were continued in the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost,—in the gift of tongues,—in the conversion of the apostle Paul,—and in the many mighty signs and wonders which were wrought by all the apostles, and by which their mission was attested.

3. Our Lord performed his miracles for the noblest purpose, to attest by the seal of heaven his own divine mission, and, consequently, to prove the truth and high authority of the doctrines which he taught. They corresponded in their nature to the benevolence and grandeur of this design. They were proved to have been real, and that they could not have been the effects of mere natural causes. They were addressed to the senses, and wrought openly and publicly in the presence of multitudes. They were, in number and variety, suited to the divine character and mission of Christ; and they were, at least in many cases, illustrative of the peculiar doctrines of that religion of which they are an evidence.

4. Can it be doubted that He who healed by a word all those diseases which are the effects of sin, has the power which he claimed to forgive sin? That He who proved himself to be able to alleviate or remove all those temporal calamities which are its consequences, can deliver from the spiritual and eternal evils of which it is the source? Is not He who gave sight to the blind capable of enlightening the understanding with the knowledge of God and of divine things? Does not He who casts demons out of the bodies of men give a sufficient pledge that he can rescue their souls from the dominion of the devil, and is able to destroy all his works? Does not He who has power instantly to cleanse from leprosy, the most loathsome disease, afford the most perfect assurance of his possessing the power to which he lays claim, of purifying the whole nature from the pollution of sin? Is not He, at whose call the dead rose to life, capable of verifying his declaration regarding the resurrection of his people to eternal happiness? Has not He to whom no one ever applied in vain for the exercise of his



miraculous power in the removal of bodily or mental disease, given satisfactory proof that him who cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out? In a word, has He not evinced, by his miraculous works, that he is an all-sufficient Redeemer, and that he is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto God by him? Have we not, in all this, a pleasing and striking discovery of the infinite power, goodness, and manifold wisdom of God, in rendering those acts of beneficence which Jesus performed on the bodies of men subservient to his great purpose of redeeming mercy regarding mankind, and to the complete attestation of that gospel which contains the promise as it gives the hope of eternal life?

5. It is clear from the declarations of the evangelists, that of all the miracles which Jesus wrought, comparatively few are recorded in the gospels. St. Matthew, after relating in his eighth chapter the miraculous cures of a leper, of the centurion's servant, and of Peter's wife's mother, concludes with this brief but comprehensive notice,—“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.” There is only an account at length of one person who was healed by touching the hem of Christ's garment, and yet we learn from the evangelist Matthew that there were many other similar cases. “They besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment, and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.” We are assured by Mark of the same thing, for he had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. Whithersoever he entered, they laid their sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole. St. Luke confirms this account: “And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.” In like manner, there is good reason for thinking that the evangelists knew of other persons who were raised to life by Jesus besides those they have particularly mentioned. This appears highly probable, not merely from the message sent to John the Baptist, in which it is said that “the dead are raised;” but from the fact that Matthew, Mark, and John have recorded each but one example of this kind, while it is certain they knew of more. The raising to life of the daughter of Jairus,

the ruler of the synagogue, is recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The restoration of the widow of Nain's son is related by Luke only; and the deeply touching account of the resurrection of Lazarus is given by John.

6. A chief reason of this selection, no doubt, was a regard to brevity. The subject on which the evangelists had to write was as copious as it was engaging. They had to give a faithful record of the words of him who spake as never man spake; and of the particular circumstances as to time and place of such of his miracles as they were directed to relate. They have inserted, each with more or less detail, an account of the miraculous manner of our Lord's birth,—the extraordinary interpositions of God in his favour,—and his various journeyings and actions in the course of his ministry. They have given the substance of his doctrine, many of his parables, together with the occasions of their delivery; the objections and questions of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, and the answers which were made to them; some of the public discourses of our Lord, and of his private instructions to his disciples; and the facts and circumstances of his condemnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The gospels in which these things are contained being a leading part of divine revelation, and intended for the use of all ranks and orders of men in all ages of the world, it was highly important and necessary that they should be short.

7. Of the three striking examples given by the Evangelists, in which our Lord raised the dead to life, the first mentioned is that of the daughter of Jairus. The parent at whose solicitation this miracle is performed, was a ruler of a synagogue, and of an order of men generally averse to Jesus; the person who was the subject of it, his only child; the pressing but respectful terms in which he entreats the exercise of our Lord's miraculous power in regard to his daughter; the perfect conviction of the spectators that she was really dead, shown both by the scorn with which they treated a doubt on that subject, and their having begun the customary lamentations for the dead; and the circumstances in which this signal interposition took place, at a time when multitudes attended our Lord's ministry, including many bitter and powerful enemies,—all these things unite in rendering this one of the most impressive manifestations of the divine power of Christ. The effect was produced instantly by his word; and of its reality all were

satisfied when they saw her whom they knew had been dead receiving food as a person in the entire possession of life and health. "The fame therefore went abroad throughout all the land." The person in whose family this miracle was done was sufficiently distinguished as a ruler of the synagogue, to render such a remarkable event a subject of general attention; and though all the circumstances in the narrative have the aspect of the most natural and unexpected occurrences, which could neither have been combined by human contrivance, nor anticipated by human foresight, no circumstance was wanting, either to ascertain the reality of the miracle, or, without any ostentation or design, to give it the most unquestionable publicity.

8. With regard to the case of Lazarus of Bethany, it is related so fully and circumstantially as to produce the most perfect conviction of its reality. It has this peculiarity, that Jesus was connected, by long intimacy and friendship, with the family at Bethany. He was in a distant part of the country when he heard of the mortal disease with which Lazarus had been seized; and two days having elapsed after this before he set out on his journey, he intimated to his disciples that Lazarus was dead. "And I am glad, he said, for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." The striking manifestation of his mighty power about to take place was intended for their conviction, and to furnish them with more exalted views of his divine character as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. This character he clearly and solemnly announced to Martha, when having gone to meet Jesus on his approach to Bethany, she said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee: Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth shall never die."

9. The distress of Martha and Mary, and his friendship for Lazarus and them, affected Jesus very deeply. When he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in spirit and was troubled; and on his way to the sepulchre, surrounded by the neighbours and acquaintances who had been condoling with the bereaved family at Bethany, "Jesus wept." His kind affections were unusually agitated, by the sorrows of his friends, and probably at the thought of

the numerous afflictions to which mankind are liable in this sinful and suffering state. Even He who came down to this valley of tears, to shed the light of heaven on the darkness of the tomb, by abolishing death, and exhibiting the glorious prospect of life and immortality, felt the sorrow which it was his errand to alleviate and remove. "In all their affliction he was afflicted;—in his love and in his pity he redeemed them. For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

10. Our Lord having arrived at the sepulchre, stood beside it, and commanded the stone which lay upon it to be removed. The sepulchre, as was usual among the Jews, and especially with persons of wealth and distinction, was hewn in a rock, and was a vault into which the body was admitted by a lateral aperture. The corpse, surrounded with linen, with the hands and feet bound, was laid, not in a coffin, but in a niche or cell of the tomb. The doubt expressed by Martha concerning the possibility of the resurrection of her brother, from the length of time in which the body had been in the grave, our Lord repelled by reminding her of what he had already told her: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

11. That divine Person who could have caused Lazarus not to have died; or, who could, without opening his lips, or leaving the place into which he had retired beyond Jordan, have raised him from the dead, stands at his sepulchre. He does so that it might manifestly appear that the restoration of Lazarus to life was the effect of his miraculous power, and an attestation of his having been sent from God: and in accordance with this design, and with the affecting and extraordinary nature of the work about to be performed, he adores and praises the Father whose servant he was: "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin; and Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."



12. What must have been the astonishment of the surrounding spectators, when they beheld, in instant obedience to the voice of Jesus, which on this occasion had been elevated that it might be heard by all, and that all might connect the miracle with the power of Christ; what must have been their astonishment when they beheld Lazarus, whom they knew had lain four days in the grave, come down from the sepulchre! The bandages prevented him from moving forward. But Jesus, by ordering the Jews to loose him, gives them a nearer opportunity of examining this wonderful sight, and of deriving from the dress of his body, from the state of the grave-clothes, from the manner in which the napkin smothered his face, various convincing proofs, that the man whom they now saw and touched alive, had been truly numbered among the dead. The greatness of this miracle, and the manner of its performance, while they afforded full proof of his mission as sent from God, were designed to illustrate the gracious designs of his mediatorial office and work. Does not the loud voice, at the utterance of which Lazarus came forth, furnish an indubitable pledge, that a command louder still will be issued by the same divine Person, at the sound of which the bars of hell and of the grave will give way, and the dead, small and great, of all ages, and of all orders, shall awaken and rise to the judgment of the great day?

13. This signal miracle was followed with great effects. It appears from the narrative that among the persons who witnessed it, there were many, who, though they had come from Jerusalem and elsewhere, to condole with the afflicted family at Bethany, were not the friends of Christ. While many, when they had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him; others, regardless of their convictions, and afraid of incurring the displeasure of the rulers, by appearing as his disciples, went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. These men doubted not the truth of the report thus conveyed to them by those who had been eyewitnesses of the facts to which it related, nor the reality of the miracle which was certified by undeniable evidence; but the effect of this belief was to arouse their indignation against Jesus, and to lead them to consult together what means might be employed for resisting his influence, arresting the progress of his doctrine, and even destroying himself. When they were in council assembled, they said,

“What do we? For this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.”

14. In the meantime, Lazarus remained at Bethany publicly to accredit the miraculous power and the divine mission of Jesus; and also to verify, in regard to the numerous and malignant enemies of the gospel, the declaration of our Lord, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Here was a person who resided close to the metropolis of Judea, who furnished in himself, to the multitudes who continually resorted thither, evidence irrefragable that Jesus was the true Messiah. Nor was this evidence exhibited in vain; for many were in consequence led to believe the gospel. “Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there; and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.”

15. The third example of miraculous power exercised in restoring the dead to life is the son of the widow of Nain. Never was a tale more simply or beautifully told than the narrative in which this event is recorded. We shall direct our attention to the circumstances in which the miracle was performed; the persons immediately concerned in it; the unquestionable evidence which it affords of the divine power and compassion of Jesus; and the effects which resulted from it.

16. (I.) Let us attend to the circumstances in which the miracle was performed. On the preceding day Jesus had been at Capernaum, beside the sea of Galilee, where he had given to the twelve apostles their commission, and had instructed and forewarned them concerning the duties which they should discharge, and the trials which they should be called to endure in the exercise of that ministry to which they were afterwards to be appointed. He whose knowledge is universal, and to whom all hearts are open, perceived, though at a distance, the bitter anguish of a mother,—of a widow lonely and afflicted, watching the countenance of her only son, as it gradually assumed the hue and the expression of death. She was

not unknown to him at that moment when she was bereaved of the endeared object of her affection. Nor could she have been altogether ignorant of the fame of that great Prophet whose power extended to all diseases; and who, since he opened the eyes of the blind, could have caused that even her son should not have died. Why, then, did she not send to Capernaum while he was yet living, to entreat Jesus, whose compassion was equal to his power, to come and heal him?

17. The reason probably was, the hope that the illness might not terminate in death. After this calamity had taken place, it was scarcely believed that the power of Jesus could be of any avail. Even Jairus, when the messenger arrived from his house, and announced the death of his only daughter, seems for a moment to have given up all hope, and to have considered her case as beyond remedy. Though the people of Israel had in former ages been accustomed to miracles, and though they had been taught to expect their repetition when favoured with great prophets, the instances, in which, at any former period of their history, persons truly dead had been restored to life, had been extremely few. The widow of Nain, therefore, though placed in the neighbourhood of the Saviour, regarded her loss as irretrievable, and continued to weep and lament even when the Lord of life was beside her. But he who came into the world on an errand of mercy, whose works of power were works of compassion and goodness, was, unasked, about to remove her distress, and had fixed in his own mind the time and the place in which his great power should be manifested and magnified. Had Jesus in every instance wrought miracles unsolicited, the suspicion might have been suggested by his enemies, that he selected the cases to which his healing power could reach, well knowing that it could not extend to all diseases. But though it was necessary, for the proof of his mission and doctrine in general, to confine himself to those who sought, or who were disposed to seek, his miraculous interposition, yet, when he had an opportunity of doing good, without incurring the suspicion of ostentation or concert, he readily showed his pity and his power to the distressed, as in the case before us.

18. The fame of our Lord's miracles having been now greatly extended, he had himself become, wherever he went, the object of universal attention. When his intention of leaving Capernaum was known, he was followed by a great

multitude. The evangelist informs us that many of his disciples went with him, and much people. The extraordinary nature of the miracle which he was about to perform rendered it highly desirable that the witnesses should be numerous, and that many more than his own professed followers should be present. As he came nigh the gate of the city, the place of public resort among the Jews, he and those who accompanied him were met by that group of weeping mourners so admirably pictured in the description of the evangelist. This meeting was perfectly casual, having taken place without any preconcert among the parties; and all the circumstances attending it, especially the publicity with which the miracle was wrought, unite in proving its reality as an astonishing interposition of the mighty power of God.

19. (II.) The persons immediately concerned in this miracle are thus mentioned by the evangelist. "When he came nigh the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her." The evangelist, in place of describing the distressing emotions of the mother, leaves us to infer the anguish of her mind from the afflicting circumstances in which she was placed. She was a widow,—the person carried out for interment was her only son,—and her situation was so generally known to have been painful, that it secured for her the sympathy of her townspeople. The death of an only son is regarded among every people as a heavy affliction; but it was bewailed by the Jews as almost the greatest earthly calamity. The peculiar duties which devolved upon the first-born, or upon the only son, as the representative of the family, rendered his death a severe bereavement, and the source of the most poignant grief. Hence the bitter penitence of the awakened sinner, when he first beholds the cross of Christ, is compared to the lamentation occasioned by so great a loss: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

20. In the case before us the distress was increased by the circumstance that the mother was a widow. Her maternal affections were still more strong, that the only son who was their



object was probably the stay and the support of her life, and that with him were connected associations of deep and holy tenderness. When death had dissevered the ties that had bound him to her heart,—ties which had been strengthened by the acts of maternal and the duties of filial love,—ties which memory rendered still more pleasing by fixing them in the view of her mind while yet softened with sorrow, and which hope had united to every future prospect of enjoyment,—when death had broken ties such as these, was not the path to the tomb, in regard to this widow, left solitary and sad? If David, when told of the death of that son who had attempted to deprive him of his kingdom and his life, exclaimed in the bitterness of sorrow, Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! what must have been the anguish of this widowed woman, bereft of her last earthly hope, as she followed to the grave her only son! It was while her silent tears bespoke the bitterness of her sorrow,—while the wounds that had been inflicted were yet bleeding,—and while the inhabitants of Nain, by whom she was surrounded, sympathised with her grief, that the compassionate Jesus approached and spoke to her words of consolation. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus, and who was tenderly susceptible of the finest feelings of humanity, showed on the present occasion how deeply he was affected by the mournful scene before him. “When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.” It is probable that the expectations of the people were now awakened; as those who carried the bier, when he touched it, stood still. They might have had some faint hope that Jesus could raise the dead; and the agitated and anxious mind of the widow began to feel the soothing influence of the words of kindness which flowed from his lips.

21. To attempt any amplification of the picture presented to our view in the following language, would be an injury to the inimitable beauty and pathos of this passage. “And he came and touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still, and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother.” In place of showing the person who had been restored to life to the surrounding multitude, to convince them of the reality of the miracle, he who had supreme dominion over nature, who could with equal ease arrest the

course of the elements and the movements of the human heart, with a majesty and simplicity suited to the character of the messenger of Heaven, he delivers the son, restored to life and health, to his mother. How transporting must her emotions have been at this affecting moment! To receive from the dead that only son with whom all the feelings that could interest her heart had been connected, was such relief as the wonder-working and miraculous power of God alone could afford.

22. (III.) This event affords unquestionable evidence of the miraculous power of Jesus. It was accomplished at once with a compassionate regard to the feelings of the mother, and with the authority of a person who possessed a divine character. In place of performing this or any of his miracles, like the prophets and apostles, in the name of another, he speaks in the style of sovereignty befitting the Lord of life and of the universe. He does not stretch himself on the corpse as Elias and Elisha did in regard to the son of the Shunamite, and that of the widow of Sarepta, but without the use of any means he calls upon a person truly dead, and he hears his voice and lives! The reality of his death is attested by the tears of his mother, in the act of following him to the tomb, and by the sympathy of the numerous mourners by whom she was surrounded. The reality of his restoration to life is proved not less fully. For the miracle was performed not only in the presence of many of the citizens of Nain, but of the multitude, including enemies as well as friends, who were in attendance on our Lord; and who were so awed and impressed with this astonishing work, that they immediately conveyed the account of it through the neighbouring regions. Its reality, therefore, as a miraculous work, was attested by numerous eyewitnesses.

23. How exalted is the conception which this single work gives of the mighty power of Jesus! The power that can restore one person truly dead to life, can raise from the dead innumerable millions. He who has the keys of hell and of death, can at any time enter the territories of darkness, and reanimate the many myriads of many generations.

24. (IV.) The effects which immediately resulted from this miracle afford additional confirmation of its reality. "There came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout

all Judea, and throughout all the region round about." This was the mode of expression made use of by the Jews to denote the Messiah. Zacharias, when alluding to the coming of this great Deliverer, says, in similar language, that the Lord God of Israel had visited and redeemed his people, and raised up for them an horn of salvation in the house of his servant David. When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus if he were really the Messiah, the words in which the question is proposed are, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" The people of Nain, therefore, and those who accompanied our Lord from Capernaum, appear now to have been convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was he of whom Moses and the prophets did write; and their impression of this fact was so powerful, arising from the miracle which they had seen, that they spread the report of it throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about. So deep and general was the conviction produced by this effect of divine power, that John the Baptist heard of it in prison; and anxious to be released from his confinement, and to be again actively employed in the service of his Lord, he sends a message, somewhat peevishly, to remind Jesus indirectly of his present situation; and probably to suggest to him, that in making choice of his apostles, he who had been his forerunner had been overlooked. He would probably say to himself, "Might not He who has restored the dead to life rescue me, if he chose, from my present confinement? While I am suffered to remain in prison, others are the witnesses of his miracles, and are appointed to reap the harvest, the seed of which I have sown. Go and remind Jesus of my situation, by asking, whether he be indeed the Messiah promised to the fathers by the prophets." The answer returned by our Saviour to this question contained an enumeration of the various kinds of miracles which he performed in testimony of the validity of his claims, and the truth and divine authority of his doctrine.

25. In conclusion, I cannot but remark, that in the persons raised from the dead by our Lord, there was a compassionate regard shown to the operation of natural affection. Of the three persons restored to life during the exercise of his ministry, one was the only daughter of Jairus; the other, the only brother of Martha and Mary; and the third, the only son of a widow. From which circumstance we learn, that the disciples of Christ, when called to mourn the death of near relations

and friends, may be assured of his sympathy. He is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and though his designs in the established course of providence do not admit of a miraculous interposition for the purpose of restoring them to life, he will send strength and consolation into our hearts. Were he on earth, he would say to such of his followers as thus mourn, "Weep not." He would direct their hopes to that world of rest and blessedness, into which neither sorrow nor death can enter; and he would tell them, that with such an inheritance in view, the separations which the last enemy now makes among those who are dear to each other ought not to be lamented with extreme sorrow. There is not a sigh that rises from their hearts but is known and regarded by the compassionate Redeemer; and in having to do with this merciful High Priest, their very afflictions engage on their behalf his sympathy and aid. Though now exalted up on high, he still says to them, "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid. I have gone to prepare mansions for you: and I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also. Fear not, then, for I am the First and the Last, and the Living One, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death. Be ye faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

1. SUCH is the importance of the resurrection of our Lord in determining the truth and divine authority of the Christian religion, that the whole cause may be considered as resting upon it. Its reality proves the truth of the Old Testament by the fulfilment of its prophecies, as well as the inspiration of Christ by the exact accomplishment of the predictions which he had delivered. It was a satisfactory and complete attestation of the validity of his claims to a divine mission and character; as it was the seal of Heaven to every doctrine he had taught. It was the decided declaration of God's acceptance of that atoning sacrifice by which Jesus finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness; and, consequently, it was a proof of the justification and safety of all who receive



him as their Saviour. It was the preliminary step to his possession of universal dominion and glory; as it is the pledge and earnest to all his followers of victory over death, and of a resurrection to everlasting life. To it both our Lord and his apostles appealed as the test of his divine mission, and as the great fact by which the truth of Christianity is determined. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ.—If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."\*

2. The resurrection of our Lord, then, may be considered as not only important to the truth of Christianity, but as indispensable to its divine authority. If Jesus had not foretold his own resurrection, and appealed to it as the test of his veracity, his followers would have regarded him as a prophet mighty in word and in deed, though he had never returned from the grave: but having laid claim to the character of the promised Messiah, and having rested the truth of his declaration on the fulfilment of his own predictions regarding his resurrection, his rising from the dead on the third day was essential to prove that he was the messenger of God: and as it was necessary to establish his character even as a prophet, so it was a sufficient attestation of his being the Son of God. Nothing short of this event could have proved any of his claims to be well-founded; but its actual occurrence is the seal of Heaven to the truth of them all.

3. I shall, in the first place, briefly notice the circumstances of the resurrection of our Lord, as stated by the evangelists. Secondly, the indirect or circumstantial evidence of the reality of this event. Thirdly, the positive testimony of the witnesses of the fact, and their competency as witnesses. Fourthly, the grounds we have for relying with perfect confidence on the truth of their testimony.

4. (I.) We are to notice the circumstances of the resurrection of our Lord. These are presented to our view in the artless narratives of four historians, whose testimony is not the less valuable that they were Christians, and were sincerely convinced of the truth of what they relate.

5. Our Lord, after he had previously endured extreme suf-

\* 1 Cor. xv. 20—26.

ferings, was condemned to the death of the cross. He expired six hours after he had been nailed to the tree; but as if to put the question of the reality of his death out of all doubt, one of the soldiers drove a spear into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out of it,—“a physical demonstration that death had for some time taken place.” As he was led out to be crucified, we are informed that a great company of his friends and acquaintance followed bewailing and lamenting him. Among the persons who stood by his cross, were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. These, with the exception of the mother of Jesus, whom the beloved disciple took to his own house, remained till the supernatural darkness was over, and till our Lord yielded up the spirit. After he had been laid in the tomb, and the great stone had been rolled to its door, the two Marys still waited at the sepulchre, and sat over against it. They, in concert with other pious women, agreed to embalm their Lord’s body on the morning of the third day; and while, with that view, they made whatever preparation they could during that evening, they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

6. But the rulers of the Jews, unmindful of the sanctity of the day, were busily employed in waiting upon Pilate to obtain a guard to watch the sepulchre, lest, as they alleged, his disciples should come by night and steal away the body, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead. “Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.” Everything connected with the sepulchre was thus as secure as they could render it, and in this state it remained on the evening of the Sabbath. But on the following morning, rather before the dawn of day, or as it began to dawn, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. In the meantime the Holy One of God arose, in a manner which no one of the evangelists offers to describe. The soldiers of the guard, recovering themselves somewhat, went into the city, and some of them proceeded to the chief priests and elders, and related what had taken place: they, when they

had taken counsel together, gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept: and if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught.

7. Ignorant of what had happened at the sepulchre, and not even knowing that a guard of Roman soldiers had been appointed to watch it, the two Marys, together with Salome the wife of Zebedee, set out at the earliest dawn to go to the sepulchre, intending to begin the preparations for embalming the body, according to the customs of their country. As they approached they said among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" But when they were so near as to look forward, they saw that the stone was already rolled away, and that the entrance of the tomb was open. This unexpected appearance naturally produced various emotions in the minds of these pious women. Mary Magdalene, anxious and alarmed, hastened away to tell Peter and John what she had seen, and the fears which, in consequence, she entertained. But the other Mary and Salome remaining behind, drew still nearer the door of the sepulchre, and, looking within, they saw the angel whose awful majesty had terrified the guard. The heavenly messenger appeared to them like a youth clothed in a white robe, and sitting upon the stone on the right side of the opening of the tomb. "He said unto them, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead: and behold he goeth before you into Galilee: lo, I have told you." They, under the influence of surprise, fear, and joy, departed quickly from the sepulchre, and did run to bring his disciples word.

8. In the meantime, though it was yet early, Mary Magdalene proceeded a second time to the tomb of Jesus, accompanied by Peter and John. These disciples, in their anxiety and eagerness, hastened to the sepulchre. John arriving first, stooped down, and looking in saw the linen clothes lying, yet went he not in. But Peter, not satisfied with looking into the place where the Lord lay, entered, and carefully examined it. In addition to what his companion had seen, he made the remarkable observation that the napkin which had been about his head was not lying loosely about, but was wrapped together

in a place by itself, a circumstance which showed the calm and dignified manner in which our Lord had left the mansion of the dead. John followed into the tomb, and was confirmed in his belief that the body of Jesus was not there. For as yet neither of them understood the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then these two disciples, meditating on the wondrous things which they had seen, returned to their own dwellings.

9. But Mary tarried behind, and stood without at the sepulchre weeping: this humble penitent, deeply sensible that much had been forgiven her, loved much. She had followed to Calvary that divine Teacher from whose lips she had so often heard the words of consolation; depressed and sorrowful, she had already been twice at his sepulchre, though it was yet early; and now she remained beside it inconsolable and alone. As she wept, "she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They asked her why she wept: she saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Her feelings were so entirely absorbed in the object of her pursuit, that the presence of angels neither surprised nor satisfied her; and her reverential regard, her ardent affection, would not allow her to dry her tears, nor to return to her home, till she had found her Lord. Her fellow-disciples had left her: even that disciple whom Jesus loved had retired from the tomb of Jesus; but she, as though the world were a solitude to her without her Saviour, remained at his sepulchre weeping. This persevering adherence to Christ was by him peculiarly honoured, for she had the privilege of being the first to see the Lord Jesus after his resurrection.

10. When Mary had told the angels the reason of her sorrow, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the overseer of the grounds, declined looking at him attentively, but said, Sir, if thou hast carried him away, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him up. In her distress and agitation, she does not even name the object of her pursuit to this unknown person; but as if the thoughts of others must have been occupied like her own, she speaks as though the cause of her grief were well known. But when



she heard Jesus address her, "Mary!" with his accustomed kindness of voice and tone, she looked, and knew her Lord. Deeply affected by a discovery so unexpected, she could only say, "Mr Master and Teacher!" and, overcome with feelings of wonder and joy, she fell at his feet, to embrace them and to adore him. "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." The meaning of our Lord by this gentle prohibition was, that Mary should not at that time stay to pay him homage, as an opportunity would afterwards be given her for doing so, but that without delay she should hasten to his disciples, and bear to them the glad tidings of his resurrection from the dead. Mary, in obedience to the direction of her Lord, departed, and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

11. It appears from the narrative of the evangelists, that her friends, the other Mary and Salome, who had accompanied her the first time to the sepulchre, had, on their return, tarried in some retired place by the way. Before they had well recovered from the surprise and agitation occasioned by the scenes which they had witnessed, Jesus presented himself to them and said, "All hail: and they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." This was the second appearance of Christ after his resurrection.

12. Besides these three pious women, there were other females, believers and friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had accompanied him out of Galilee. The chief of these was Joanna, the wife of Chusa, an officer in the household of Herod Agrippa. They also, according to their agreement before the Sabbath, went to the sepulchre on the morning of the third day, but at a later hour than the other women. On their arrival they found, of course, the stone removed. They entered into the tomb, and satisfied themselves that the body of Jesus was not there. While amazed and perplexed at what had happened, the two angels who had been seen by the other women appeared close by them in shining garments; and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you

when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest."

13. In consequence of this report, Peter went a second time to the sepulchre, again explored the tomb, and beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which had come to pass. While meditating on what had occurred, his Lord appeared unto him. The peculiar circumstances of this interview are not made known to us. It was the third appearance of Christ, and the *first* to any of his apostles.

14. Towards the evening of the same day two of his disciples had occasion to go to Emmaus, a village about eight miles from Jerusalem. They talked together by the way on the subject that most deeply affected their hearts. "And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said; but him they saw not. Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things

concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, and he made as though he would have gone further; but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight." This was the fourth appearance of our Lord after his resurrection.

15. The two disciples, filled with joy in recollecting how their hearts burned within them while he talked to them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures, could not delay to communicate the glad tidings to their brethren. They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them. They immediately received the joyful news from the assembled disciples, that the Lord was risen indeed, and had appeared unto Simon Peter; while the two in their turn related what had occurred to themselves; what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. While they were conversing on this deeply interesting topic, and while the doors of the apartment in which they were met were shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus presented himself to them, stood in the midst, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all

nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”\*

16. This was the fifth appearance of our Lord on the very day of his resurrection. On this occasion he showed himself to a considerable number of his friends, whom he invited to feel and touch him, to observe his hands and feet which had been pierced, and to satisfy themselves of his corporal reality. Thomas, who had been absent during this deeply interesting interview of Jesus with his disciples, came in immediately after; and when they told him that they had seen the Lord, he persisted in refusing his assent, and declared that nothing less than the evidence of his senses could satisfy him;—“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” His Lord condescended to give to this apostle the very evidence which he demanded. On the following first day of the week, the disciples being met, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the doors being shut, stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you. Addressing himself to Thomas, he showed his perfect knowledge of the expressions which he had formerly uttered, and of his unreasonable disbelief. “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not disbelieving, but believing. Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God!” This was the sixth time that Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection.

17. The feast which had brought the followers of Christ from Galilee to Jerusalem being now over, they returned home encouraged by the promise of seeing their Lord soon after their arrival. While seven of them were together, engaged in their occupation of fishers, Jesus showed himself unto them at the sea of Galilee. On this occasion, after much familiar conversation, Jesus saith unto them, “Come and dine. And he took bread and gave them, and fish likewise. So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. When this question was asked a third time, Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest

\* Luke xxiv. 36—50.



thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He afterwards signified unto him by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." This, as John calls it, was the third time he had appeared to the body of his apostles, but it was his seventh appearance since his resurrection.

18. Afterwards, pursuant to a previous notice which had been given by an express appointment of Christ to his disciples generally, a very numerous meeting was held on a mountain in Galilee, at which Jesus was present. There were between five and six hundred brethren assembled on this occasion; the majority of whom were living, and appealed to as witnesses, when Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is highly probable that it was at this time that Jesus gave commission to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This appearance of Christ to this large assembly of chosen witnesses was his eighth after his resurrection.

19. His ninth appearance was to the apostle James, probably in Galilee; but Scripture gives us no information as to the particular time and circumstances.

20. It is very probable that Jesus had many interviews with his disciples which are not recorded; for we are taught that "he showed himself alive to his chosen witnesses, after his sufferings, by many infallible proofs, being seen by them through the period of forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

21. But the tenth and last appearance of Christ after he was risen, according to the Scripture record, was at Jerusalem. It took place about forty days after his resurrection, when his disciples again came up from Galilee to observe the approaching feast of Pentecost. This interview was of considerable length, and from the circumstances connected with it, must have been deeply affecting and interesting. Being assembled together with them, Jesus "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the

Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." While conversing with them in this endearing and instructive manner, he conducted them for the last time to Bethany,—a spot associated in their minds with tender and sacred recollections. It was here that he was formerly met by the multitudes who accompanied him with their hosannas to Jerusalem,—that he had often retired for prayer with his disciples:—it was here he endured that agony in which his sweat was as it were great drops of blood:—it was here that he was betrayed by one of his disciples, forsaken by the rest, and was delivered into the hands of sinners. Having reached this interesting place in the company of his faithful friends and followers, "he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then they returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

22. Such is the history of our Lord's resurrection, and of his various appearances, according to the narratives of the evangelists, after that event. While each of these four narratives exhibits the great outlines of the story, they vary as to minuter matters, because each writer describes the information which he had received in his own particular way, and because each had smaller circumstances to mention which the others omitted. After a careful comparison they are seen most perfectly to harmonize; and this undesigned and complete agreement leaves on the mind the strongest conviction of honest and independent narration.

23. (II.) I am to make a few observations on the circumstantial evidence for the reality of our Lord's resurrection. Of this nature we may consider the unquestionable fact, that Jesus often intimated, in the course of his ministry, that he should rise from the grave on the third day. That he did so, and that his prediction was well known to his enemies, is

demonstrated by the conduct of the Jewish rulers, who requested a guard from Pilate to watch the sepulchre, and who assigned as the reason for presenting this petition that Jesus had said, that after three days he should rise from the grave. But if Jesus had not been conscious of a divine character, and if he had not known that he possessed almighty power to verify his prediction; why should he have foretold his own resurrection? Why should he have directed the eyes of friends and foes to the tomb in which he was to be laid, and have appealed to his rising out of it on the third day as the test of his veracity? If he had not been divinely commissioned by God, this was an effectual method to detect and to terminate imposture. What impostor would have recourse to it, unless he were under the influence of the most violent enthusiasm, or of imbecility of mind?

24. But these are properties which even his enemies cannot ascribe to the blessed Jesus. The doctrines which he taught, and his manner of teaching them, show that he was elevated far above these human infirmities. The discourses which he delivered, so full of divine wisdom, and so accordant with the most enlightened reason, prove that he spake as never man spake. His having repeatedly foretold his own resurrection, and his having appealed to it as the test of the truth of his declarations, furnish very strong presumption in favour of the reality of the event; "such a presumption as, had it been connected with any common fact, would have gained for it almost universal credit."

25. Further, the fact that at the precise time which Jesus specified, his body was not, by the confession of all who had access to know, to be found in the sepulchre in which it had been laid, although the most effectual precaution had been taken to prevent its removal, furnishes powerful presumptive evidence for the reality of his resurrection. We have seen that by the testimony of the women who went from the city to embalm the body; of the disciples who afterwards entered the tomb; and of the soldiers who had been placed as a guard over it, the body of Jesus was not in the sepulchre. This fact being absolutely certain, the only inquiry is, in what manner it was removed; whether by his disciples, as his enemies alleged; or whether, as the Gospels affirm, he was raised from the dead by the mighty power of God.

26. That the former could not possibly have been the case,

is demonstrably proved. The rulers of the Jews, as has been already mentioned, procured from Pilate a band of Roman soldiers to watch the sepulchre; men who were accustomed to rigorous discipline, and to all the hardships of the military life, upon whom the friends of Jesus, had they been inclined, were not in a situation successfully to make an attack. Such a design was never imputed to them. The soldiers who fled in terror from the sepulchre, and who told what had happened, alleged no such thing. How did the Jewish authorities conduct themselves when the guard came to them in such circumstances? Did they show by their indignation that they really believed that the military had been unfaithful by falling asleep? Did they represent the guilt of the soldiers to the governor, and procure the punishment of men who had neglected their duty, and disappointed them? Did they not, on the contrary, take the course which fraud and fear alone could have dictated? Did they not prevail on the guard by bribery, and by assurance of protection from punishment, to publish a silly and palpable untruth, that they had fallen asleep, and that while they were in this state the disciples had stolen away the body?

27. This story was silly as well as untrue; for if all the soldiers were asleep, as it alleged, how could they know who carried off the body, or in what manner this was done? Nor will the difficulty be lessened by supposing that one of them might have been awake; for in this case he would have awakened his companions at the approach of the disciples, and the design would thus have been frustrated. But, in truth, it was morally impossible that, with the habits and discipline of the Roman military, sixty soldiers upon watch, who were certain that a neglect of duty would be punished by death, should all, at the same moment, fall asleep. Or, even if such a thing had been possible, how could the disciples have foreseen it so as to have taken advantage of the opportunity? They had all forsaken their Master and fled. His death had filled their hearts with sorrow and despondency; and they were as unable as they were disinclined to execute the desperate task which the Pharisees through fear represented them as having accomplished.

28. How did these same Jewish authorities conduct themselves, in the course of a few weeks afterwards, in the presence of those very disciples respecting whom they attempted, by



fraudulent means, to put this inconsistent and incredible story into circulation? The apostles boldly and fearlessly accused them as the murderers of Jesus, and asserted that God had raised him up. Did their judges adopt a line of conduct calculated to show to others that they were conscious of being innocent of so grave a charge? Or did they attempt to deny the reality of our Lord's resurrection, by so much as even alluding to the ridiculous falsehood which they bribed the soldiers to repeat? On the contrary, they admit the truth of both the one and the other of these declarations. Do they not virtually acknowledge themselves to have been guilty of the death of Jesus, when they accuse the apostles of an intention to bring this man's blood upon them? For, if his body was not raised from the dead, according to his prediction, he was an impostor, and the Jewish rulers were so far from being guilty, on this supposition, that they merely performed their duty. The guilt of shedding his blood could not possibly rest on them, nor, to use their own language, be brought upon them by the apostles, nor by any others. All this they perfectly knew; and, therefore, had they not believed him to have risen from the dead, they could not have used this phraseology. Their whole conduct is that of persons conscious of guilt, and who knew that they were incapable of denying the truth of the apostles' affirmations. This consciousness of wrong made them feel and act like cowards. They were forced to listen on their judgment-seat to the witnesses of the resurrection, declare the reality of that event, and avow it to be their purpose to persevere in defiance of all earthly authority in publishing their testimony. "We ought," say they, "to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

1. HAVING attended to the circumstances of the resurrection of Jesus, as stated by the evangelists, and also to the indirect

and circumstantial evidence of the reality of this event, we are now to consider,—

2. (III.) The positive testimony of the witnesses of the resurrection, and their competency as witnesses. Jesus did not appear to all the Jews after he rose from the dead; “for not to all the people was he shown alive after his sufferings, but to witnesses chosen before of God; to us,” says the apostle Peter, “who did eat and drink with him after that he arose from the dead.” Though the period that intervened between the resurrection and ascension of our Lord was only forty days, the number of persons who saw him, and who conversed with him in the course of that time, was much greater than, from a cursory view of the Gospels, we are apt to imagine. Besides the soldiers who fled in consternation into the city,—the women who went early to the sepulchre to embalm the body,—and the disciples who followed,—there were many others who were witnesses of the reality of his resurrection. His return to Galilee, where he had spent the greatest portion of his life, was partly for the purpose, as is highly probable, of giving to many persons an opportunity of being fully satisfied by the evidence of their own senses, that the Lord was risen indeed. We are assured by the apostle Paul that he was there seen by above five hundred brethren at once; the greater part of whom were living, and appealed to as witnesses when this declaration was made.\*

3. But it has often been asked, Why he did not appear publicly to the Jews, and thus give ocular demonstration of his almighty power? Why did he not manifest himself to the people openly after his resurrection as well as before it? The reasons of his declining to do so are obvious, and completely satisfactory to any person who calmly reflects upon them. Without adverting to the very different circumstances in which the Saviour was placed during his humiliation, prior to his rising from the dead, and those in which he appeared after that event, when his glorification was begun; and without considering the dignity and propriety due to his new situation, it is clear that the evidence for the truth of Christianity would, in the estimation of many, be weakened, rather than strengthened, by such an exposure. If the Jewish rulers, and the body of the Jewish nation, had persisted in their unbelief, as is probable they would, may we not be assured that

\* 1 Cor. xv. 5—10.

unbelievers in after-ages would adduce the circumstance as a plea against the sufficiency of the proofs? If, on the other hand, they had yielded to conviction, and had universally received the Saviour as risen from the dead, would it not have been alleged that a coalition had taken place between Jesus and his former opponents? A suspicion might thus have been excited which we could not have removed; and we should have wanted "that guarantee against the possibility of a deep-laid plan to deceive, which we now derive from the determined hostility of the persons who occupied the seats of authority, and who had both every motive and every means to detect a fraudulent scheme if it had existed." Besides, may it not on good grounds be maintained, that the Jewish nation, who had resisted the evidence which had so amply been furnished them of the divine character and mission of Christ, had no claim to expect that additional proofs should have been presented to them? What reason was there to expect that these additional proofs would have been more effectual in leading them to the obedience and acknowledgment of the truth than the former? "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

4. To all this it may be added, that supposing our Lord had shown himself to the whole Jewish nation, and that they had borne testimony to the fact, still it would have been necessary to have had recourse to the testimony of those who were most familiar with him, and who, because they knew him intimately, could not have been mistaken as to his identity. As then the testimony of his disciples was necessary to determine the value of any more remote testimony, it is manifest that we have no cause to regret the want of what must have leaned upon it; and that the testimony which has been transmitted to us respecting the resurrection of our Lord, is the most proper that could be given to prove to all future generations the reality of that event.

5. The apostles, together with the numerous Christian disciples who saw our Lord after he was risen, bore decided and uniform testimony to this fact: this constituted the chief theme of their ministry, which they exhibited as an attestation of the truth and divine authority of the religion which they taught, and of the safety of all who truly embraced it. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also

received," says the apostle Paul, "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And, last of all, he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." The apostle Peter, addressing the Jewish rulers, said, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.—Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."\*

6. The nature of this fact was such that they were perfectly capable of ascertaining its reality. It was a question not of fancy or opinion, but of the plainest matter of fact, which required only the exercise of the senses of sight, and hearing, and touch, and which left no room for mistake. It was an event, the reality of which they ascertained, not from the relation of others, but by their own senses; and not on one occasion only, but at several times, and at different places. They testified to the world that they had often seen Jesus after his resurrection; that he often associated with them as he formerly had done during the forty days before his ascension into heaven; that he familiarly conversed with them, and instructed and directed them in reference to their future conduct. They declared that he furnished them with every desirable opportunity, and with all necessary means, for becoming fully assured of his identity; that, to convince them of this, he recalled to their memories intimations which he had formerly given of his death and resurrection; that he even invited them to examine the marks left by the nails with which he had been fixed to the cross; and to put their hand upon the scar made by the spear with which his side had been pierced. It was not one person, but many who saw him: they saw him not only separately, but together; not only by night, but by day; not at

\* Acts iii. iv.



a distance, but near; not once, but several times: they not only saw him, but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, examined his person to satisfy their doubts. These particulars are decisive.

7. Indeed it is evident that the means and opportunities of this kind which were given to the apostles, were more numerous than were necessary for their own individual conviction of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. But it was highly expedient and proper that they who were to be the accredited witnesses of this event to all succeeding ages, should, for the sake of others who were to believe on their testimony, have been furnished with the most abundant evidence, even more than the most scrupulous could reasonably ask. It was fit that the grounds of their belief should have been such as would be most convincing to others, and as would leave them without excuse if they continued unbelieving. For this purpose the apostles had it in their power to testify to mankind, not merely of what had happened on the morning of the third day at the sepulchre of their Lord, but that they had often seen him after his resurrection, that they had the evidence of their senses of sight, and hearing, and touch, that he was really their Master, having had frequent opportunities of familiarly conversing with him during the period of forty days.

8. On the supposition of their veracity, they must have had the most perfect knowledge of the fact to which they gave testimony. They had accompanied the Saviour during several years; his appearance, voice, manner, and doctrines were familiar to them, and they were therefore able without the slightest difficulty to distinguish him from a stranger. He manifested himself to them not in darkness but in open day; not once only but often; and if we will allow them to have possessed the corporeal senses which are common to man, it was impossible for them not to have known with certainty whether Jesus rose.

9. They could not have been deceived through the influence of a predisposition to believe his resurrection; for no such prepossession existed in their minds. On the contrary, their opinions and prejudices were so strong on the other side, that they had failed to understand the prophetic intimations which our Lord had uttered. They looked for a glorious Messiah, but it was not to suffer and die, and rise from the dead. They expected him to subdue the nations under Jewish control; and

were confident that they themselves would be elevated to dignity and splendour at his court. This bias was constantly showing its ascendancy over their minds during their attendance on the ministry of Christ; and that it remained till the ascension of their Lord, notwithstanding all that they had heard and witnessed, is manifest from their asking him at the last interview which they had with him upon earth, Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Though he had often, in the plainest language, predicted his death, they could not be brought to believe that their Master would really die; and on one occasion, Peter, in the name of his brethren, ventured to express their feelings on this subject: "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee."\*

10. Nor were they less incredulous with regard to his resurrection. They were reluctant to give credit to the testimony to this fact: and it is plain, that they would not admit its reality till they had obtained the evidence of their own senses. The declarations of the women when they returned from the sepulchre, and told the things that had happened to the eleven and to the rest, they treated as idle tales. They continued in their disbelief even after such proofs had been afforded to them of the resurrection of their Lord, as ought to have convinced any reasonable person; and therefore Jesus upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed them who had seen him after he was risen. In the most condescending manner he invited them to behold his hands and his feet, and to assure themselves by incontrovertible evidence that it was He. "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet." Their slow, and even reluctant, belief in the resurrection of our Lord, however unreasonable in itself, was not only consistent with the temper of mind which they had shown throughout their past history, but it strongly proves the impossibility of their having been deceived in regard to the fact.

11. This must especially appear to have been the case when we consider the number of the witnesses. Mistake or deception in regard to so many in judging of a plain matter of fact, was absolutely impossible. If it was not probable that two or three could be deceived in a matter repeatedly subjected to their senses, the case is put far beyond a doubt when many

\* Matt. xvi. 22.

persons heard, saw, touched Jesus, and conversed with him after his resurrection;—persons of different ages, habits, and temperaments;—persons who had intimately known him, and attended his ministry several years before his death;—persons who had seen him often after he was risen, at times and in circumstances the most favourable;—and whose number in one instance amounted to above five hundred. Deception or imposition in such a case, either by the artifice of others, or through the force of their own imaginations, was manifestly impossible.

12. It was a question, as has been already remarked, in judging of which there was no room for the exercise of fancy or of imagination. Besides, the history of the apostles shows how contrary their turn of mind, their conduct, and their discourses were to those of enthusiasts. They could not by mere enthusiasm have been imposed on in regard to a matter of fact. For if Jesus was not raised from the dead by the mighty power of God, as they declared, his body must have been either in their possession, or in that of their enemies. In either case they could not have been deceived. For if it had been in the possession of their enemies, they would have soon, in their bitter eagerness to extirpate the Christian name and cause, have openly produced it; and consequently have removed the mistake of the apostles: or if it had been in their own possession, it is utterly impossible they could have believed that he was risen from the dead, if his corpse was lying before them. No enthusiasm ever reached to such a pitch of extravagancy as that: a spirit may be an illusion; a body is a real thing, an object of sense, in which there can be no mistake. The presence and the absence of the dead body are alike inconsistent with the hypothesis of enthusiasm; for, if present, it must have cured their enthusiasm at once; if absent, fraud, not enthusiasm, must have carried it away.

13. As the apostles, therefore, were not and could not be deceived themselves in bearing testimony to the reality of their Lord's resurrection: it follows, if their declaration was not true, that they were wilful deceivers of others. This leads us to consider,—

14. (IV.) The integrity of the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, and the undoubted truth of their testimony. The proofs of these are so numerous, that, deeply important as the subject is to which they relate, I must restrict myself to a brief illustration of them.

15. The exalted piety and holiness of the apostles exhibited in their conduct, form a strong presumption in favour of the truth of their testimony; as do also their simplicity and candour which they manifest in their writings. They relate with the most perfect artlessness, in regard both to themselves and their brethren, circumstances which they knew the world would deem discreditable to them. They tell their own failings, their dulness in comprehending the plainest predictions of their Master regarding his death and resurrection;—and their denial and desertion of him in his extremity. They record also the poverty, the sufferings, and death of their Lord;—that he was so poor as not to have where to lay his head;—that he was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;—that he earnestly prayed that the cup of affliction might pass from him;—that he was seized like a common malefactor;—that he was mocked and rejected by the Jewish rulers;—that he was scourged and condemned by the Roman governor; and that he suffered the painful and ignominious death of the cross. They knew well that the recital of these things would make an impression on mankind very unfavourable to Christianity; that to the Jews, who expected an earthly and conquering Messiah, they would prove a stumbling-block; and that to the philosophizing Greeks they would appear as foolishness. Yet these things in the history of their Lord, at which the world would be offended, are stated by them with as much openness and fulness, as those things which would naturally tend to exalt his power and dignity in public estimation. Is not this the conduct of upright and honest men, whose testimony to the important facts which came within their own observation ought to be received as certain truth?

16. This conclusion is strengthened by considering the views which the apostles themselves had formerly entertained respecting the humiliation and death of their Master. These were altogether opposed to the notions which they fondly cherished of a temporal kingdom, and a conquering and glorious Messiah; and the doctrines of Jesus, that his kingdom is not of this world, that in the present state they should suffer tribulations, and that it was in heaven they were to obtain the complete happiness which would reward their services, were at variance with their earliest and strongest prepossessions. Yet, we find that after the apostles published the resurrection of Jesus, those events in his history, and those



humbling doctrines which he had taught, which had formerly been offensive to them, formed the chief theme of their ministry, and the subject of their glorying. In place of dwelling with exultation on those circumstances in his life which seemed calculated to raise their Master in the estimation of the world, such as his dominion over all nature, his power of healing all manner of diseases, and his raising the dead by a touch or by a word, they gloried only in the cross of their Lord Jesus Christ. They regarded his abasement and death as the procuring cause of their redemption, and as the foundation of all their hopes. In place of looking, as they had been accustomed, for temporal prosperity, they had respect to a future and glorious reward; and reckoned that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared to the glory that should afterwards be revealed in them.

17. This extraordinary change in their sentiments and feelings is only to be accounted for by their belief in the resurrection of Christ. Unless they had been convinced of the reality of that event, according to their own declaration, and had been fully instructed by the Saviour in the doctrines of his kingdom after he rose from the dead, such a complete alteration of their views, opinions, and conduct, is inexplicable.

18. This change was as remarkable in regard to their character as to their views and feelings. How did it happen that the timidity which they all showed when they beheld their Master and themselves surrounded with dangers, forsook them when they began to bear testimony to his resurrection? How came it to pass that the same persons who had formerly all forsaken him and fled, were now so intrepid in his service, so firmly and devotedly attached to his cause, that they reckoned it an honour to be counted worthy of suffering shame for his sake? Did they not adhere with unwavering constancy to their testimony in the midst of privations and sufferings, declaring that none of these things moved them, and that they counted not their own lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy, and testify the gospel of the grace of God? They themselves attribute this conduct to their perfect knowledge of the resurrection of Christ, and to the divine influences which in his exalted state he had communicated: "We cannot," say they, "but speak the things which we have seen and heard. The God of our

fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. And we are his witnesses of these things."

19. That they were true witnesses of the fact to which they bore testimony may be confidently inferred from this, that they could not possibly hope to succeed by publishing a falsehood, and could have had no conceivable interest in making the attempt. If Jesus, who had spoken as never man spoke,—who had wrought the most stupendous miracles,—who had conducted himself with such matchless wisdom that his enemies could not find anything in his behaviour on which to found an accusation against him,—if he, notwithstanding his superiority, was condemned and crucified, how could they entertain the slightest hope of succeeding in converting their countrymen to his religion? On any other supposition than that Christ rose from the dead, what inducement could they have to engage in so impracticable, so hopeless an enterprise? Could they have expected, in such circumstances, that a single individual of the nation would give credit to their testimony, when by doing so he relinquished his religion,—was excommunicated from the privileges peculiar to the Jewish people, and risked the loss of his property and of his life? Could they, poor and despised as they were, engage in the design of bringing persons, who had already resisted the evidence for the divine mission of Jesus, to believe that he rose from the dead, when they had known that he had not risen? To suppose that they would thus enter on a work which they knew no exertion could accomplish, is to impute to them a want of common sense and understanding; it is to suppose they were fools or madmen. It was therefore morally impossible that they should attempt, or have succeeded in the attempt, of gaining credit to their testimony, if that testimony had been false.

20. The method which they adopted to gain the belief of mankind to their testimony, concerning the resurrection of Jesus, shows their integrity and veracity. They stated the fact; the evidence of its reality; and the doctrines founded upon it, and connected with it; abstaining entirely from the enticing words of artificial eloquence. Poor themselves, they had neither worldly honour nor possessions to promise or bestow. They in every instance disclaimed the use of carnal weapons in making proselytes. Without the countenance of any earthly government, and in direct opposition to powerful

prepossessions, they stated the gospel of the grace of God, and left the truth to commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

21. They did indeed furnish indubitable proof of the truth of their testimony,—a kind of proof which no impostors could adduce. On the day of Pentecost, on which they began to publish their testimony in the presence of a vast assembly of Jews and proselytes out of many nations, they were endued with the gift of tongues, and were immediately able to address the multitude in their respective languages. During the inquiry, which a circumstance so novel and extraordinary excited, Peter explained in the different tongues of the people assembled the subject of their astonishment, by referring it to the immediate and miraculous interposition of the exalted Saviour. He testified to them, in common with the other apostles, that Jesus was risen, according to the predictions of the prophets; and that he had shed forth upon his disciples the Holy Spirit, the effects of which they now saw and heard. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."\*

22. This was the first time in which the apostles bore public testimony to the resurrection of Christ; and so powerful did the evidence of its truth appear to the hearers, that three thousand were convinced by it, made an open profession of their belief in Jesus, and were united to his disciples. The proof presented to this assembly must have been felt as overpowering to have produced conviction in so large a number, and to have led them to embrace, as their risen and exalted Saviour, Him whom their nation had crucified. When are men so disposed to resist evidence as when the effect of it is to prove themselves deeply guilty? For Jews to have acknowledged the truth of the testimony of the apostles, was to plead

\* Acts ii.

guilty to the charge of having been accessory to the death of the Son of God. Yet so manifest, so irresistible, was the truth of that testimony, confirmed as it was by miraculous interposition, that it came with power to their consciences; and with the eagerness of persons anxious for deliverance from so perilous a condition, they appeal to the apostles as men and brethren for information as to the way in which they might obtain the pardon of sin.

23. A similar scene took place at Jerusalem, not many days after this remarkable occurrence. The apostles performed a miraculous cure on a lame person who occupied a regular station at the entrance of the temple. The miracle naturally excited astonishment. Peter addressed the people, and declared that Jesus, of whose resurrection they were witnesses, had given them power to work miracles in his name, in attestation of the truth of their testimony. "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."\* On this occasion, as formerly, many of the hearers believed, and were added to the church.

24. The miraculous powers with which the apostles were intrusted were the credentials which they everywhere exhibited as the servants and ambassadors of Christ. They rested their claim to credit as the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus on their exercise of the miraculous gifts which they possessed; and which they communicated to others. They appealed to the works which they performed as the attestation of God to their character and mission: and as success very rapidly and universally followed this appeal, the conclusion is unavoidable, that these men were the servants of the most high God, who show unto mankind the way of salvation.

25. What were the circumstances of trial and suffering in which they delivered their testimony? They gained neither honour nor wealth of an earthly nature: and they exposed themselves to all manner of persecution, and even violent death. They had to struggle against power united to hatred in every country. They experienced, as their Lord had told them, manifold tribulations; they did so on account of their

\* Acts iv.



adhering to their testimony to the fact of the resurrection of Christ. They were warned of the consequences of such conduct; and they could at any time during their career, by retracting or suppressing their testimony, have not only exempted themselves from sufferings, but have been elevated to riches and honour. Would not the chief men in Judea, who, in their anxiety to conceal the resurrection of Christ, bribed the soldiers who guarded his sepulchre to publish a falsehood; who, for the same end, threatened his disciples with severe punishment; have liberally rewarded the apostles, if they had only been persuaded to have remained silent? Why, if their testimony had been false, did they not accept of this reward? They voluntarily suffered, and counted all that the world could offer but as dross for Christ. They were all equally firm, equally faithful, and adhered with undeviating constancy to their declaration in all circumstances. They bore all that man could inflict not with sullenness but with cheerfulness for Christ's sake; and the greatness of their sufferings only showed the fervour of their attachment. Their testimony was the same in the dungeon as on the scaffold; when placed before the tribunals of man, and in the immediate view of appearing at the dread tribunal of God. They looked to eternity with transport and joy; and felt assured that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, would be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord.

26. Finally, the purpose for which they bore testimony to the resurrection of their Lord tends to confirm our faith in their integrity and veracity. It was to promulgate a religion, pure, holy, and benign,—a religion in which God, the supreme moral Governor of the universe, is represented as a just God and a Saviour,—a religion which views man as fallen, depraved, and guilty, but which exhibits and offers to him a salvation adapted to his circumstances and wants. The apostles laboured, suffered, and died, that they might extend a religion which gives glory to God in the highest, while it proclaims peace on earth, and good-will to the children of men,—a religion, the chief theme of which is redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ. To make known its blessings, they voluntarily endured stripes, and bonds, and imprisonments, rendering good for evil, and praying for those who despitely used them and persecuted them.

27. Their testimony on its first announcement was received by thousands in the very city where our Lord was crucified; who, in commemoration of his resurrection from the dead, began to observe as sacred the first day of the week, the day on which he rose. This day ever since has been kept as the Christian Sabbath by a large portion of the human race: a memorial of the resurrection of the Redeemer, instituted at the time, and in the very place, in which that glorious event happened.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES RECORDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT PROVED BY THE TESTIMONY OF NUMEROUS AND UNEXCEPTIONABLE WITNESSES.

1. THE authenticity of the New Testament having been fully established, we must hold that the miracles which the writers of that volume have recorded were really performed. There were twelve persons chosen by our Lord to be witnesses of the numerous miracles which he wrought, and to bear testimony concerning them. They had the best opportunities of ascertaining the truth of the things which they testified; for they were favoured with the most intimate friendship of their divine Master during three years, and all that period had seen the actions of his life, the extraordinary circumstances of his death, his resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

2. Nor do they appear to have been deficient either in capacity or integrity. The things concerning which they were to bear testimony were not matters of opinion, about which they might be deceived; but they were matters of fact, cognizable by the senses, and in regard to which persons of plain understandings were quite able to form a correct judgment. This is an important circumstance, by which the witnesses of the miracles of the gospel are distinguished from the advocates and confessors of every other system of religious opinions. The man who submits to persecution and martyrdom rather than relinquish or deny his creed, gives undoubted evidence of his sincerity; but as he suffers for opinions merely, the sincerity of his belief in them does not afford any evidence of their truth. But the case is far different in regard to matters of fact, which are palpable to the senses, and about which it is impossible for one man, far less for twelve men, and least of all for a hundred, to be mistaken.

3. As the witnesses of the miracles of the Gospel had capacity to judge of the matters of fact which were submitted to them, so is it evident that they had integrity to prevent them from giving false testimony. No one who reads their writings can regard them as impostors. Their sincerity, disinterestedness, and honesty, are apparent throughout. They speak as in the presence of a holy and heart-searching God. Their whole conduct is that of true men, who spoke only that of which they had certain knowledge, and testified what they had seen. Accordingly, they announced their testimony *first* to the Jews, who, notwithstanding their erroneous views, had, on the supposition of the authenticity and divine authority of the Old Testament, more knowledge of the criteria by which the truth of any supposed new revelation claiming a divine origin was to be tried than the heathen nations. From their knowledge of the writings of the prophets, they were able to judge, or at least they were in circumstances in which they ought to have been competent to judge, whether the predictions respecting the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus: and, accordingly, they were required to compare what Moses and the prophets had written with the character, miracles, sufferings, and death of Him whose resurrection and ascension into heaven they proclaimed. The plan which they thus acted upon in the commencement of their ministry precluded the possibility or even suspicion of imposture. As the miracles of Jesus were wrought among the Jews, they, it might be supposed, were best capable of judging of their reality; and it was to the people who had witnessed these mighty signs and wonders, that it behoved to preach *first* the doctrines of Him who performed them. When the apostles appealed to the knowledge of those whom they thus addressed of the actual occurrence of the miraculous works to which they referred, they had ample opportunity, if these miracles had never been seen by them or heard of, to have charged the teachers of the Christian faith as impostors. Had these teachers proceeded immediately to Athens, or to Corinth, or to Rome, and in either of these cities begun their ministry, how would ancient and modern unbelievers have triumphed!—Would they not have maintained the possibility, nay, the probability, of imposture? The followers of Jesus, they would have said, had previously agreed as to the story they should publish to the world, and they went into regions

in which they could not easily be contradicted,—to countries where they might give an account of many miraculous events, since their reality, however much it might be questioned, could never be fully and triumphantly refuted. That the most satisfactory evidence might be given to all ages of the divine origin of a religion in which all are equally concerned, Christ commanded his apostles to go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to begin their ministry among the inhabitants of the country and city that had witnessed the extraordinary miracles of his life, and that had seen and known the no less extraordinary events which had accompanied and had followed his sufferings and death.

4. The original witnesses of the miracles of our Lord were Jews,—members of a nation that had hitherto kept themselves separate from all nations, and that had regarded with a proud and exclusive spirit the distinctions which had been conferred upon them. They were now forced by the power of conviction to make known to the Gentiles the mighty works of which they had been eyewitnesses,—and thus to unite, contrary to ancient and fondly cherished prepossessions, in demolishing that wall of partition by which they had been separated from every other people. When all the circumstances of the case are considered, the fact that they were Jews who first conveyed the testimony of Jesus to heathen nations, who persisted in bearing this testimony in the face of persecution and death, furnishes strong presumption in favour of their veracity.

5. But there is ample evidence to show that these witnesses were sincere and honest in relating only what they knew to be true. Their writings bear indubitable marks of their personal conviction of the truth of their testimony. Their character also, as utterly unfitted by their education and standing in society for imposing on mankind, furnishes corroborative evidence to the same effect. Though every inducement was presented to the many thousands who were eyewitnesses of the miracles of the Gospel, to acknowledge that they had been deceived, they persevered in declaring their belief in those great facts concerning which they bore testimony. Even those who, rather than be thrown to wild beasts, abjured the Christian faith, never insinuated that the miracles were not real. Such persons, in many instances, suffered from remorse of conscience, but in no single case was there indignation expressed at



having been deceived,—at having been duped by fraud and imposture. There was one individual who had every opportunity of knowing the secrets, had there been any, of Christ and his apostles,—who could not but have known where the imposition was, if any had existed in the gospel miracles,—and whose avarice and treachery would have led him to make a disclosure, had he been capable of doing so. But even Judas, after he had betrayed his Master, bore testimony to the evidence of Christianity. “I have sinned,” said he, “in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.” A warm dispute between Paul and Barnabas separated them for a time; but when thus disunited they continued to announce to the world with as much zeal as when they acted together the testimony of Jesus. When a temporary disagreement took place between the apostles Peter and Paul they had no imposture to reveal, but like sincere and honest men they persevered in declaring to the world the things which they had seen and heard.

6. Their constant adherence to their testimony exposed them to the greatest sufferings. They, in place of attaining wealth and honour, the objects of worldly ambition, suffered the loss of all things, sustained reproach and injury, and were treated as outcasts. They were “in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils among their own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”\* They might at any time have escaped from these sufferings by retracting their testimony; but their reply to those who attempted to persuade them to do so was, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. We are witnesses of all things which he (Jesus) did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.”† The things of which they were witnesses were facts,—numerous, diversified, and palpable facts;—and facts, too, which they could have had

\* 2 Cor. xi. 23—27.

† Acts iv. 19; x. 39.

no bias to believe from the prejudices of education, their national prepossessions, or their worldly interests. What, then, but the certainty of the facts could have led them voluntarily to submit to persecution, and torture, and death? What but the absolute knowledge of the reality of the things which they testified, could have led them, with unexampled patience, meekness, and benevolence, to endure martyrdom as the seal of their testimony?

7. Nor are the tone of mind, and the manner in which the witnesses gave their testimony, undeserving of special attention. It is impossible to read it, as recorded in the New Testament, without the conviction that they were deeply and always in earnest,—that while they were awed by the truth and infinite importance of the things which they testified, they were at the same time animated by the most disinterested benevolence. Their whole character is presented to our view as men of artless simplicity, of pure integrity, who had nothing to conceal, and whose only object was to convey and promote the truth. Their humility also is remarkable. Though in the possession of miraculous gifts, and though they exercised authority in the Christian society, they show their humbleness of mind by recording their own infirmities, and by relating those things in the life of their Master which proud and worldly-minded men would have concealed. They do not appear anxious to conciliate the prejudices or passions of any class of men: they do not flatter either the Jews or the Gentiles;—those who are exalted in rank and station, or those who occupied a lower position in society. This, indeed, was conduct befitting the accredited witnesses of the miracles of the Gospel; but it was a method which impostors would have found most unsuited to their purpose, and which, therefore, impostors would never have adopted. But while the witnesses are humble and candid, they are in their tone and manner authoritative. They demand obedience to their message in the name of God. They state facts as the servants of the most high God; and they both work miracles, and lay down their lives, in testimony of their veracity. No remarks are thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture: no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative.\* It never came into

\* Beattie.

the mind of these writers to consider how this or the other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raised upon them. But without at all attending to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their testimony, there is no help for it: they tell the truth, and attend to nothing else. Surely this looks like sincerity, and that they published nothing to the world but what they believed themselves.\*

8. They not only bear testimony in this manner to the miraculous facts on which Christianity is founded, but they assert in positive and unequivocal terms that they wrought numerous miracles themselves. Thus the apostle Paul, speaking of his own ministry among the Galatians, says, "He that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"†—"For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God."‡—"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."§ Here, then, we have one of the witnesses not only asserting his having performed miraculous works, but making the assertion in the face of those persons among whom he declares the miracles to have been wrought.

9. We have therefore in attestation of the miraculous story for which the first propagators of Christianity suffered, the testimony of those who performed many of the miracles: secondly, the testimony of those on whom some of them were performed; and, thirdly, the testimony of those among whom they were performed, and who were eyewitnesses of them. I need not say anything further concerning the testimony of those who performed them. The second class of persons, or those on whom some of the miracles were wrought, also give their evidence. We have the testimony of two of them,—that of the man born blind, who was restored to sight by Christ (John ix.); and that of the lame man, who was healed by Peter and John. (Acts iii.) The testimony of the third class of persons, or those among whom the miracles were wrought, and who were

\* Duchal.

† Rom. xv. 18, 19.

‡ Gal. iii. 5.

§ 2 Cor. xii. 12.

eyewitnesses of them, is decided, uncontradicted, and extremely valuable. They amounted to three thousand on the first day on which the gospel was preached; that is, three thousand Jews, who gave the strongest proof which it was possible for them to give of their belief in the reality of the miracles by embracing Christianity: and soon after, many myriads of Jews and Gentiles gave similar proof of the sincerity of their belief, and in doing so, exposed themselves to suffering and death. The testimony thus transmitted to us of the many thousands who were witnesses of the miracles that were wrought in attestation of Christianity, is uniform, uncontradicted, and perfectly conclusive.

10. But it may be said that many were witnesses of the miracles of the Gospel, and that many more had evidence from eyewitnesses of their performance, who did not show their conviction of their reality by embracing Christianity. They, however, without a dissentient voice, have borne testimony to the genuineness of the miracles. This is the confession of the whole Jewish nation and Gentile world. The silent acquiescence in the truth of the gospel miracles is deeply impressive. But we have more than silent acquiescence. The rulers of the Jews confessed, that "this man doeth many miracles."\* In relation to Peter and John, these same rulers said to them, "What shall we do to them? For that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it."† They could not deny the miracles; but they attempted to escape from the conclusion which their truth involved, by attributing them to demons. Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, and the Emperor Julian, the ancient enemies of the Christian faith, acknowledged the miracles of Christ and his apostles, while they ascribed them to magic. Could the testimony of these men have been stronger had they been not only unable to deny the great facts on which Christianity rests, but constrained by the power of conviction to renounce heathenism, and profess themselves the disciples of Christ? Would their testimony have been more satisfactory had they become friends, instead of continuing enemies? If so, though we cannot produce their testimony as that of converts, we can adduce that of many thousands, who from being enemies were made friends by the force of truth. Each of the apostles is a witness of this

\* John xi. 47.

† Acts iv. 16.



description; and to them we may add the myriads of Jews and heathens who became the followers of Christ, and the heroic confessors of the fact that the miracles were true. They had no earthly inducement, but the contrary, to make the change. They had the most powerful motives to remain as they were, but there were none of a worldly nature to induce them to become Christians. They thereby exposed themselves to the certain hazard of persecution, and poverty, and death. Why, then, did they voluntarily choose a course of life in which they were made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men; in which they suffered hunger, and thirst, and nakedness; in which they were calumniated, buffeted, and had no certain dwelling place; in which they were defamed and persecuted, and treated as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things? Why did they persist in this course of suffering, and submit to martyrdom, when by a word they could have escaped from it? It was because they firmly believed the truth of what they professed. It was this deep conviction that led hundreds of thousands in the apostolic age, Jews, Greeks, and Romans, who had been adversaries, and in many cases persecutors, of the Christian faith, to bear solemn and impressive testimony to the reality of the miracles of Christ and his apostles, and to seal their testimony by renouncing all that habit, and education, and country, and kindred, had rendered dear to them, and professing Christianity at the expense of their lives. What stronger evidence could be imagined or desired?

11. It will probably be said by some persons that these were Christians, and therefore interested witnesses. They were Christians, it is true, but they were once enemies; and we are bound to believe, from the sufferings to which a profession of Christianity exposed them, that they embraced the gospel because they were convinced of its truth. Ought that circumstance to diminish the weight of their testimony? Is Tacitus, who remained a heathen, more deserving of credit when he bears testimony to the crucifixion of Christ and the sufferings of his followers, than Paul, who from having been a violent persecutor, became a Christian? Tacitus was exposed to no danger by the testimony which he gave as to the existence and prevalence of Christianity; but Paul, whose mind was not less cultivated and acute, furnished the strongest proofs of his sincerity in the evidence which he gave of the truth of the gospel, by submitting to the loss of all things,

even of life itself. In proclaiming the testimony of Jesus, we see in him a man of liberal education and of sound judgment, who traversed a considerable portion of the world, who endured every species of hardship, encountered every extremity of danger, assaulted by the populace, punished by the magistrates, scourged, beat, stoned, left for dead; expecting, wherever he came, a renewal of the same treatment, and the same dangers; yet when driven from one city preaching in the next; spending his whole time in the employment, sacrificing to it his pleasure, his ease, his safety; persisting in this course to old age, unaltered by the experience of perverseness, ingratitude, prejudice, desertion; unsubdued by anxiety, want, labour, persecutions; unwearied by long confinement, undismayed by the prospect of death.\* Is not the testimony of this man to the reality of the miracles which he himself wrought, and which were wrought by Christ and his other apostles, worthy of all acceptance? When many thousands who were placed in similar circumstances, and who had the best opportunities of ascertaining the truth, unite in the same testimony, have we not a weight and a splendour of evidence which "the testimony of Tacitus cannot confirm, and which the absence of that testimony could not have diminished?"

12. It is undeniable, then, that the first Christians did themselves believe in the truth of Christianity. Does it, therefore, follow that Christianity is true? It does, for this obvious reason, that the thing testified is not a matter of opinion, but of fact; and, therefore, the same evidence which proves the sincerity of the eye and ear witnesses, proves the reality of the facts concerning which they bear testimony. The martyr to an opinion only proves his sincere adherence to it, and nothing more; but the martyr to his belief in a fact, establishes at once, and by the same means, his own sincerity in believing it, and the certain reality of the thing believed. "We are still at liberty to question the philosophy of Socrates, or the orthodoxy of Cranmer or Servetus: but if we were told by a Christian teacher, in the solemnity of his dying hour, and with the dread apparatus of martyrdom before him, that he saw Jesus after he had risen from the dead; that he conversed with him many days; that he put his hand into the print of his side; and in the ardour of his joyful conviction exclaimed, My Lord, and my God! we should feel that there was no truth in the world, did this language and this testimony

\* Paley.

deceive us.”\* Had the testimony of the witnesses been to an opinion or principle, though we could not question the sincerity of their belief in its truth, we might feel at liberty to think they were deceived; but the case is altered, when we remember that it was to numerous and palpable facts, cognizable by the senses, and about which there could be no mistake. The testimony, besides, was that of many individuals, eye and ear witnesses, who had the best opportunities of ascertaining the truth of the facts which they certified.

13. They could not have been deceived. Is it insinuated that they might have been deceivers,—men who were resolved to submit to any sufferings for the sake of the glory of founding a new religion? But the nature of the religion which they promulgated, and of the writings which they have left us, render it impossible for any man to believe them to have been the impostors which this supposition implies. Besides, it is not possible that the five hundred brethren, to whom Paul referred as living witnesses of the resurrection, could have all been engaged in falsehood and collusion. Nor could the numerous members of the church at Corinth, to whom he wrote two epistles, in which he reminds them of the power of working miracles which some of them possessed, be deceived in regard to a matter palpable to their senses. Of the many thousands who believed, in Judea and over the heathen world, how happened it that no one ever expressed a doubt of the reality of the miracles of the New Testament? All embraced the gospel, and at the hazard of their lives, on the admission, and in the firm belief, of the unquestionable truth of the miraculous facts on which Christianity is founded.

14. But it has been alleged that the unbelief of the Jewish people generally throws doubt on the truth of the Christian miracles. But we deny the fact alleged. That many of the Jews, perhaps the majority, remained unbelieving, is certain; but multitudes of the Christians had been Jews who, constrained by the force of evidence, embraced Christianity. They furnished all the evidence which it was possible for them to give, and to which infidels profess to attach great weight, of their belief in the miracles of Christ and his apostles. Supposing an additional hundred thousand Jews had renounced Judaism, and had become Christians,—they would, indeed, have formed so many additional witnesses of the truth of the

\* Chalmers.

gospel, but witnesses whose evidence would make no impression on the mind of those who urge the objection in question, merely because they had ceased to be Jews, and had embraced the religion of Christ. And yet all who relinquished Judaism did so in defiance of long cherished prejudices, in opposition to national pride and bigotry, and at the risk of their lives, and they thus impressively announced their conviction of the truth and divine authority of Christianity.

15. Is it still asked, Why did not the whole Jewish nation believe? How could any of them resist the evidence arising from a series of miraculous works said to have been wrought in their presence? It is a sufficient answer to say, that their violent opposition to a religion which made no account of their national distinctions, and placed the Jews on a level with the Gentiles, rose to the height of passion; and that under the power of passion they disregarded all the evidences that were presented to them. Indeed, it is not easy for us to conceive how difficult it must have been for a Jew, even when he could not deny the reality of the miracles, to persuade himself that Jesus, a man of sorrows, was the Messiah. With us, the admission of the reality of the miracles would lead us immediately to concede the truth of his claims. But with many of the Jews the case was otherwise. Their understandings were powerfully biassed against these claims by prejudice and passion; and while they acknowledged the miracles, and reasoned concerning them, they resisted the conclusion to which they were intended to lead. They endeavoured to satisfy themselves that they were right in so doing by attributing the supernatural effects which they witnessed to the agency of demons. To such a charge no other reply could be given than that which was made by our Lord, when he showed that the tendency of his doctrines was totally opposed to Satan's kingdom, and that, therefore, he could not be supposed to co-operate in promoting these doctrines. Many of the Jews, notwithstanding, yielded to the sway of passion, and thus were blinded to the infallible attestations of the divine authority of Christianity. It is to the operation of this cause that we are to attribute the surprising fact, that some of those who were present when Lazarus came out of his grave, and who confessed the reality of the miracle which was wrought, believed not on Christ, but went away, and gave information to the rulers of the event.



16. But after all, the actual state of the case is more favourable to the historical argument in support of Christianity, than it would have been had the whole Jewish nation renounced Judaism and embraced the Gospel. Had such a revolution taken place, would not infidels have said that there was a collusion between the Jewish rulers and the apostles, and that all were imposed upon, because all were willing to be deceived? As it was, this cannot be alleged. The many thousands of the Jewish people who believed did so because of the irresistible force of that evidence which proved Jesus to be the Messiah; and they maintained their profession, and attested its sincerity, by submitting to losses and sufferings. And even those of the Jewish people who persisted in their attachment to Judaism, and rejected Christianity, have corroborated the truth of the gospel history, and by their silent acquiescence in the reality of all the Christian miracles, have furnished triumphant testimony in their favour.

17. The case was the same in the Gentile world as in Judea. Many in every land believed the gospel, and many rejected it. We can account for the conduct of the former only on the supposition that the evidences of Christianity are true. With regard to the latter—those who resisted and repudiated the new religion—numerous causes were in operation to prevent their believing. The persons who preached the gospel were Jews, and were therefore regarded with contempt by men of rank and learning in the heathen world. They would consider Christianity as a variety of Judaism, which they would treat, as they treated the other religions of Rome, as fables. The question as to its heavenly origin and divine authority, they would scarcely deign to entertain. From their predisposition to treat it with scorn, their understandings were shut to all evidence and argument in its favour. Hence the reason of their silence in so many instances concerning it. They passed over the whole matter as unworthy of their notice. I refer particularly in this remark to the first century: and in confirmation of it, I need only allude to the opprobrious terms by which Tacitus designates the Christian religion—"exitiabilis superstitio" (a pernicious superstition)—an expression which shows the contempt with which he regarded the whole matter, or rather the contempt with which it was viewed by the literary men of his day. With this feeling in his mind, was it to be expected that Tacitus would have borne direct evidence

to the Christian miracles? Or need we be surprised that so many writers of that age omitted the mention of Christianity, when their notions of its nature and character were so erroneous? Men of rank, fortune, and abilities are often found, even in Christian countries, to be surprisingly ignorant of religion, and of everything that relates to it. Such were many of the heathens. They despised Christianity beforehand, and placed themselves in a position where the power of its evidences could not affect them. They were therefore silent concerning the religion of Christ. There were many, however, even of this rank, who embraced the gospel, and by their transition from heathenism to Christianity gave the strongest testimony in its favour; but the very fact of their being Christians diminishes, most unreasonably, in the estimation of many, the force of their evidence to the truth of the gospel.

18. The chief testimonies to the Christian miracles were given, it is true, by Christians; but then we should remember that they were at one time heathens, and many of them were in the rank of literary men. Many of their testimonies, though recorded at the time in which they lived, have been lost, because the documents which contained them were suspended by the circulation of those authentic accounts of Christianity which were written by persons who had the best opportunities of being well informed as to the facts:—I mean the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. When these were published, the memoirs of the life of Christ, to which St. Luke refers in the beginning of his Gospel, gradually sunk into oblivion, because it was felt that they were rendered unnecessary by the written evidence for the reality of the transactions alluded to, by the most competent witnesses. We ought to be satisfied with the testimonies which satisfied the men of the age when the miracles of the New Testament were wrought. The Gospels of the companions of our Lord, and who were with him during the whole of his ministry, were deemed far more valuable as authentic records of facts, apart altogether from their character of inspired writings, than those that were put forth by other persons, however honest.

19. The original witnesses of the Christian miracles, then, have given their testimony, not only in opposition to their own early and inveterate prejudices, but at the expense of all their earthly comforts, and even of their lives. Nothing can be alleged against their integrity, capacity, and competency, but

the contrary. In addition to the evidences of their veracity, which have been already alluded to, I may notice some of the numerous presumptions in favour of it. In the first place, the credentials which they ascribe to their divine Master are those only which were appropriate to attest the validity of his claims as a Teacher sent from God. There is here such a connexion and consistency as truth demands. In the second place, a presumption arises in favour of the Christian miracles, from the fact that they were professedly wrought to authenticate a revelation which all admit to have been required by, and adapted to, the moral ignorance and depravity of the human race. A third presumption in favour of their veracity proceeds from the manner in which they communicate the peculiar doctrines of the gospel,—making no attempt to show their truth by argument, but propounding them on the authority of God, by whom they are revealed. A fourth presumption arises from the very minute description which they give of the place where, and the persons on whom, or in whose presence, the miracles were performed,—affording all the means by which inquirers might obtain satisfactory information. A fifth, from the manner in which they have so intimately connected the subject-matter of their narrative, with the history of the people, age, and country, where it is represented to have taken place;—a method characteristic of honesty and integrity, but which would have led instantly to the detection of falsehood. A sixth, from the number of original and independent witnesses by whom the Christian miracles have been authenticated,—a circumstance which, viewed by itself, renders the supposition of ignorance or fraud in the highest degree improbable. And a seventh presumption in favour of the veracity of the original witnesses, is the variety of manner in which they bear testimony to the facts of the gospel history. This variety would not have existed on the supposition of collusion; but it is what might have been expected from the testimony of several honest and independent witnesses, who spoke what they had seen and heard.

20. When, then, we consider the first teachers of Christianity in the character of witnesses, bearing testimony to facts which had come under their own observation, we are bound to regard the sufferings to which they submitted, in this character, as giving great weight to their testimony. When, in ordinary cases, the witnesses of a matter of fact are numerous, and when

there is an entire though not a preconcerted agreement in their statements, their evidence is justly viewed as conclusive. The witnesses of the facts recorded in the New Testament were not only numerous and concurring, but an adherence to their testimony subjected them to great sacrifices; it was given in circumstances which would have deterred them had they been doubtful of its truth; it was announced with the same solemnity and unhesitating firmness before the tribunal of the Jew and the Greek, in the hamlet of barbarians, and in the seat of philosophy; and during a long course of calumny and persecution, in which they suffered the loss of all things but the satisfaction of a good conscience, they gave the same report of that which they had seen, and the same account of the object of their mission. According to their own statement, they "approved themselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by love unfeigned." Had their course of trial been less severe, their testimony, though in itself equally true, would not have been transmitted to posterity, accompanied with such superabounding proofs of indubitable truth.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES PROVED BY CONTINUOUS TESTIMONY: CHRISTIAN WRITERS—COMMEMORATIVE INSTITUTIONS—THE CHURCH.

1. WE formerly showed, when proving the authenticity of the New Testament, that the incidental allusions by the evangelists to the facts which lay within the scene and the time of their narrative, are fully confirmed by the minute history given of his country during this period by the Jewish historian Josephus. In addition to other facts of the sacred narrative, the early diffusion of Christianity, that it was embraced by great multitudes, and that its disciples were subjected to extreme sufferings, are attested by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny. But in attesting these facts, these distinguished heathen writers must be regarded as bearing testimony, indirectly, to the miraculous character of the Christian religion.

2. The companions of the original witnesses, the five apostolic fathers, bear testimony to the truth of the New Testament,



by quotations from it, and references to it; and thus virtually bear testimony to the miracles recorded in it. Their object, indeed, was not to give a narrative of these miracles. This had been done already by four different authors, who possessed every desirable qualification for the task; and the most appropriate way in which they could express their firm belief in the mighty works of Christ, was to express their faith in those authentic records which were received by the Christian world. This, accordingly, they have done. To have written another gospel could have answered no valuable purpose whatever. The explicit testimony which they would have thereby borne to the miracles of our Lord, they have given in a mode still more impressive, by appending their solemn declaration of reverence for, and belief in, the accounts which were set forth by the apostles. They, however, do still more than this. They all refer to the chief of the Christian miracles, the resurrection of our Lord, the fact on which Christianity rests.

3. Clement, whose name is mentioned in the New Testament, and who is one of the apostolic fathers, speaks of the resurrection of Christ in his Epistle to the Church at Corinth. "Let us consider," says he, "beloved, how the Lord does continually show us, that there shall be a resurrection; of which he has made the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits, having raised him from the dead." The testimony thus borne to the greatest of all miracles is virtually the attestation of Clement to all the other miracles of our Lord. Ignatius, another of the apostolic fathers, and who was bishop, in the first century, of the church of Antioch in Syria, certifies the same great fact. "After his resurrection (the resurrection of Christ) he did eat and drink with them,"—alluding to the passage in the Acts of the Apostles, in which it is said that his disciples did eat and drink with him after he arose from the dead (x. 41). Polycarp, also, the companion of the apostles and bishop of Smyrna, says in reference to this great event,—“Who shall believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in his Father, who raised him from the dead; having believed in Him that raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave him glory, and a seat at his right hand; to whom all things are made subject, that are in heaven and that are in earth, whom every living creature serves.” I shall only add an extract from a letter of Irenæus, respecting the venerable Polycarp, preserved by Eusebius.—“I saw you,” says he, addressing Florinus, “when I was very

young, in the Lower Asia, with Polycarp. For I better remember the affairs of that time than those which have lately happened; the things which we learn in our childhood growing up in the soul, and uniting themselves to it. Insomuch that I can tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out, and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and his discourses to the people; and how he related his conversation with John, and others who had seen the Lord; and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard from them concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrines, as he had received them from the eyewitnesses of the Word of Life; all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures."

4. In addition to the written testimony from the apostolic age downwards, we have the unwritten testimony implied in the consent of the multitudes who embraced Christianity to the truth of the gospel. The continued and uninterrupted existence of the Christian community or church, in every age to the present, affords powerful evidence of the reality of the miraculous facts on which Christianity is founded. The unbeliever who maintains the impossibility of converting heathen nations *now* to Christianity without the aid of miracles, is bound to account for the way in which so many myriads in the heathen world were converted to the Christian faith in the Augustan age of Rome, should he deny the miracles of the New Testament. The account which is given in that Book of the origin of the Christian church in all the nations of the earth is credible; the miracles which were wrought, and the agency which was employed, were, as all must admit, adequate to the production of the most astonishing revolution that has ever taken place on the earth,—a revolution which was effected at a period of the world, and in cities and nations, in which there were numbers distinguished by their learning and eloquence, in which philosophers of all sects taught the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus. It was during this period, so remarkable in the history of the world, that the revolution to which I refer was accomplished, extraordinary in its character, its extent, its permanency, the instruments employed in effecting it, its influence on the happiness, domestic and social, of the human race, the institutions, civil and religious, which have arisen from it, the number and magnitude of the effects which have resulted, and which are to result from it. Men of all

ranks, and multitudes of all nations, were turned from the pollutions of paganism to the knowledge of the only true God, to the faith of Christ as the only Saviour, and to the practice of all the duties and virtues which Christianity inculcates. The causes which are assigned in the New Testament are those only which could produce such effects. The existence of the church, therefore, from the period in question until now, is a standing memorial of the reality of those miracles from which the church derived its origin.

5. The same facts are attested by commemorative institutions, which have been observed from the apostolic age until now. We formerly applied the argument in Leslie's *Short Method* with the Deists, in reference to the miracles by which the divine mission of Moses was attested. It is equally applicable to the Christian miracles. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these mighty works; and they were instituted at the very time when these things were said to be done; and they have been observed without interruption in all ages through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. The last of these institutions is commemorative not only of our Lord's death, but of his resurrection: his disciples were enjoined to do this till he come again. Thus we have a standing memorial of this great miracle, instituted at the very time when it took place, and observed from that time to the present day. We are thus furnished with various evidences, all uniting in bearing attestation to the reality of the gospel miracles, and consequently in establishing the truth and divine authority of Christianity.

6. Infidels, with the view of weakening the evidence, have attempted in vain to institute a comparison between the impostors of former times and the Author of Christianity. Porphyry, who was a native of Tyre, and a bitter enemy to the Christian religion, from his anxiety to depreciate it, and to retard the rapid progress which it was everywhere making through a belief in the miracles of Christ and his apostles, published a life of Pythagoras, which, like the life of Apollonius by Philostratus, was intended to show that the miracles of Jesus Christ were equalled by those of certain heathen philosophers. Pythagoras, who had been dead almost eight hundred years, and concerning whom scarcely anything had been recorded by any credible historian, was represented as having wrought miracles, and as having imparted the same power to Empedocles

and others.—Philostratus, who taught oratory at Rome, undertook, at the request of Julia Severa, the wife of the Emperor Severus, to write the life of the celebrated impostor Apollonius of Tyana, with the design of depreciating the evidences for Christianity. But both Porphyry and Philostratus, by their efforts to oppose the gospel, have become, in consequence of these very efforts, unwilling witnesses to the fact, that in their day Jesus Christ and his apostles were *universally* acknowledged to have wrought miracles. The extracts from Celsus, who wrote against Christianity in the latter end of the second century, as preserved in the work of Origen against him, furnish valuable testimonies in confirmation of the same truth.

7. But it has been asked, Why have not miracles been continued, to afford to every age the same evidence in support of Christianity with which the apostolic age was favoured? The answer to this inquiry has often been given, and is obvious. If we reflect on the design of miracles, we must be satisfied that the power of working them could not, consistently with this design, have been continued long after the completion of the canon of divine revelation. They are intended, as appropriate evidence, to attest a supernatural communication from heaven. Miracles, and a revelation of the will of God, are cotemporaneous. If Christ and his apostles had made known only a part of the religious truth which was designed for the world, there would be nothing incongruous in the supposition, that until such knowledge should be complete, individuals in the church from time to time, or a regular succession of persons, should have been inspired, and enabled to work miracles in proof of their inspiration.

8. But it may be alleged, that though the Mosaic revelation was established by miracles, miracles did not cease with the death of Moses and Aaron, or even with that of their immediate successors. The reply to this is, that the revelation of the Mosaic dispensation was gradual and progressive; and that until it was completed, four hundred years before the Christian era, the prophets who were employed from time to time in making additions to it, wrought miracles in attestation of their divine mission and inspiration. Besides, the peculiarity of that dispensation, arising from God's being the temporal sovereign of the Israelites, rendered miraculous interpositions proper and necessary. But we should have deemed it unnecessary, and even strange, that the apostles should have performed



miracles to attest the miracles of Moses or Isaiah. Equally unnecessary and strange would it be, under any circumstances, for a preacher of the gospel in modern times to be able to furnish miraculous testimony in support of the apostolic ministry. The volume of divine revelation has been closed and sealed. Miraculous interposition *now* would indicate that something is still required to be added to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Such interpositions were intended, not for the preservation, but for authenticating and establishing Christianity, and therefore their continuance would be utterly superfluous.

9. It is proper to remark, in conclusion, that the miraculous interpositions in attestation of the Scriptures of the Old Testament and of the New ought to be regarded, not as a series of unconnected facts, but as one great continuous miracle, to which, until its final completion, generation after generation of eyewitnesses bore their successive but really concurrent testimony. As Christianity is only a continuation and consummation of the system of supernatural interposition, which, on the supposition of the truth of the books of the Old Testament, was in operation from the beginning of the world, it was to be expected that the last and most perfect dispensation should have been signalized by evidences of the same character as attested the earlier and less perfect dispensations. But this end having been attained, it was proper that miracles should cease;—first, for the reason mentioned above, namely, that the canon of divine revelation was closed, and fully authenticated: secondly, because the church is no longer confined to one particular nation, as among the Jews, but is dispersed through the whole world: and, thirdly, because miraculous interpositions would cease to bear that character if they were continued from age to age. They would become common events.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### ON THE ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY.

1. I HAVE deferred entering on the consideration of the argument from prophecy until now, that I might present it to the view of the reader at once. It is almost unnecessary to say, that the evidence furnished by prophecy is applicable to the whole of divine revelation, and forms an attestation of the

truth of the Old Testament, as complete and powerful as it brings to bear on that of the New. But the nature and effect of the argument will be more advantageously contemplated by placing it before our view in unbroken continuity.

2. The scheme of prophecy, as contained in divine revelation, extends from the beginning of time till the consummation of all things. It relates, either directly or indirectly, to a person of unequalled dignity and glory, who was to make this world the theatre on which he was to perform his mighty works. "The declared purpose for which the Messiah, prefigured by so long a train of prophecy, came into the world, corresponds to all the rest of the representation. It was not to deliver an oppressed nation from civil tyranny, or to achieve one of those acts which history accounts most heroic. It was another and far sublimer purpose which he came to accomplish; a purpose in comparison of which all our policies are poor and little, and all the performances of men as nothing. It was to deliver a world from ruin; to abolish sin and death; to purify and immortalize human nature; and thus, in the most exalted sense of the words, to be the Saviour of all men, and the blessing of all nations; a spirit of prophecy pervading all time, characterising one person of the highest dignity, and proclaiming the accomplishment of one purpose, the most beneficent, the most divine, that imagination itself can project. Such is the Scriptural delineation, whether we will receive it or no, of that economy which we call prophetic." \*

3. That the knowledge of futurity can belong only to Him who is at once omniscient and omnipresent, is unquestioned. He only who made and who sustains all things, can know the capabilities of the creatures which he has formed, and all the possible tendencies and results of that course of nature which he himself has established. He only, therefore, can reveal to the subjects of his moral government, should it please him so to do, the train of future events. This, accordingly, he claims as his peculiar prerogative. "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

\* Bishop Hurd's Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies. Sermon ii.

4. To disclose events which are distant and future is a miraculous interposition of omniscience, and is as much beyond the agency of mortals as the performance of works which are characteristic of omnipotence. It furnishes an argument, the most convincing and irrefragable, for the inspiration and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. It is so admirably adapted to the nature of man, and to the circumstances of the human race, that the lapse of ages serves only to strengthen the evidence which is derived from the completion of prophecy.

5. But as there have existed false pretensions to prophecy, it is important for us to ascertain by what principles genuine prophetic oracles are distinguished. "The prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, says the God of Israel, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods; even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken; but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously. Thou shalt not be afraid of him." It is indispensable, therefore, that the following circumstances unite in regard to any declaration, in order to prove it to be truly prophetic. First, that it be indubitably manifest that the prophecy was promulgated and recorded before the event which it describes; secondly, that the agreement between the prediction and the event in which it is said to receive its fulfilment be clear and palpable; and, thirdly, that the event foretold must be of such a nature as to have been impossible, when the prophecy was announced, to have foreseen its occurrence.

6. These tests, of which a sound understanding must readily approve, are in substance prescribed by God himself in the passage just quoted. When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken. On the contrary, if the thing follow, and come to pass, it is certain that the declaration uttered was spoken by inspiration of God. On the application of this test to himself as a prophet, our Lord rested the admission of his claims. When, at the celebration of the Last Supper, he intimated to his disciples that one of them should betray him, he fixed upon Judas Iscariot as the individual who should be guilty of this great wickedness, and

added, "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." In like manner, when he foretold his departure to his disciples, and promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, he said, "Now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe."

7. That the prophecies which are contained in the Old Testament were written long before the occurrence of the events which they describe, we have the most perfect certainty. They were proclaimed to a whole nation by a succession, not of obscure, but of accredited individuals, during upwards of a thousand years; they were not delivered for the purpose of gratifying the passions, or of promoting the worldly views of any class of persons; and they were publicly incorporated with the records of a kingdom. While they served the important purpose of continually reminding the Jewish people of the extraordinary character of the economy under which they lived, and of confirming their faith in the divine authority of the Mosaic Scriptures and institutions, they directed their views to the coming of the promised Deliverer, who should introduce a more perfect dispensation. The circumstances which rendered it wise to separate the Jews from every other people, unite in showing the necessity of having confined the mission of the prophets to the Hebrew nation. For, what had been the consequence had the case been otherwise,—had they been indiscriminately scattered over the heathen world? Would not their predictions, in all human probability, have become subservient to the worst superstitions, and would not their ultimate design have been completely frustrated? "They would have been mixed and confounded with all the absurdities of the heathen oracles, and must soon have become utterly incapable of answering the purposes of a divine revelation."

8. But in consequence of their mission having been restricted to one people, their prophecies were carefully recorded in the sacred writings, and have been transmitted to us in their pristine purity. The genuineness and authenticity of these writings having been proved, it follows of course that the prophecies which they contain, and which relate to the characters and facts of the Christian dispensation, were delivered long before the occurrence of the events which they describe. I shall here merely allude to the facts, that the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek at least two hundred



years before the Christian era, and were, through the medium of this version, in very general circulation over the Roman empire in the days of our Lord. The integrity of the books of Moses is also certified by the translation which was made of them into the old Samaritan character five hundred years before the Christian era, which translation, in consequence of the jealousy between the Jews and the Samaritans, was preserved with the most scrupulous care. Even could we suppose it possible for the Jews, zealous as they were for the preservation of the law, to have conspired to alter their Scriptures, they could not, from the rival sects into which their nation was divided, have succeeded in the attempt. It is morally certain that persons who differed so widely in their opinions as the Pharisees and Sadducees, and who were so jealous of each other's influence and reputation, would exercise a mutual and salutary control in reference to their guardianship of the Scriptures.

9. It may be mentioned as a collateral proof of the existence of the prophecies respecting the Messiah, prior to the time when our Lord appeared, that it is universally admitted that there was a general expectation in that age that an extraordinary Personage should arise in the land of Judea. This prevalent hope is adverted to in the New Testament, which informs us that many looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and waited for the consolation of Israel; that when John the Baptist appeared, all men mused in their hearts whether he was the Messiah, and the priests and Levites sent to ask him, Art thou that Prophet? The conclusion which the people drew from the miracles of Christ was, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." Under the influence of this general expectation, wise men came from the East to Jerusalem in search of him who was to be born King of the Jews. Josephus says, that which chiefly excited the Jews to war was a prophecy found in the sacred books, that at that time some one within their country should arise that should obtain the empire of the world. Many were persuaded, says Tacitus, that the era was now arrived which had been predicted in the ancient books, when the East should prevail, and when those who came out of Judea should obtain the sovereignty. Suetonius also bears testimony to the existence and antiquity of the prophecy, and to the universality of the expectation founded upon it.

10. It is certain, then, that the books of the Old Testament,

and the prophecies contained in them, existed some centuries before the Christian era; and that they had raised in the Jewish nation a general expectation of an extraordinary Personage. Jesus affirmed that he was the Person thus foretold and described. He proved that he was a true prophet, and a messenger sent from God, by the miracles which he wrought. But he laid claim to a still higher character, the character of the Messiah concerning whom Moses and all the prophets did write; and by a brief comparison of some of the predictions which relate to the Messiah, we shall have the most complete evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

11. The prophecies contained in the Scriptures are divided into two great classes; those which have been clearly fulfilled, or which are receiving their fulfilment at the present day; and the prophecies both of the Old Testament and of the New which still remain unfulfilled.

12. The prophecies included in the first class may be referred to the following heads. First, prophecies which were originally intended to apply to Christ alone. Secondly, prophecies which were from the first designed to have a double application, primarily to characters and events in the history of the Jews, but ultimately to the Redeemer and his kingdom. Thirdly, prophecies which relate to the diffusion of the gospel, and the enlargement of the Christian church. Fourthly, prophecies which apply to the Jews in particular. Fifthly, prophecies which relate to other nations and empires. Sixthly, prophecies regarding the rise and progress of Antichrist. And, seventhly, prophecies delivered by our Lord. I shall make a few remarks on these particulars.

13. But before proceeding to these remarks, I shall offer a few preliminary observations.

First, the force of the argument from prophecy is continually growing. It has been increasing in strength from the time when the first prediction was fulfilled. Though the mere delivering of a prophecy can be no proof of the divine mission of the person who utters it, the fulfilment of it is; and Christ and his apostles laid claim to the evidence furnished by the accomplishment of a continuous chain of prophecy which had been communicated to the world during four thousand years. The argument has been accumulating ever since; nor will it acquire all its strength till every prediction is fulfilled, till the Jews are restored, and the fulness of the Gentiles is gathered

in. This peculiarity of the prophetic evidence renders it most valuable. The lapse of time only makes it still more impressive; and in regard to this, we, and the generations which are to follow, will be more highly favoured than those who lived in the apostolic age.

14. Secondly, Fulfilled prophecy is evidence of a strictly miraculous character. All prophecies, even according to Mr. Hume, are real miracles, and as such only can be admitted as proofs of any revelation.\* There is thus a divine sanction given to the religious system with which they are incorporated. Miracles, in the ordinary acceptation of that term, do not furnish more conclusive evidence of a divine revelation than is afforded by the fulfilment of undoubted prophecy. As no imposture can possibly assume the prerogative of omniscience, the unquestionable existence of prophecy in any system of religion is the strongest evidence that can be given of its having proceeded from God.

15. Thirdly, The evidence of prophecy is addressed to our senses. The proofs of fulfilled and fulfilling prophecy are visible to the eyes of all men. We have only to read what Moses predicted upwards of three thousand years ago, regarding the Jewish people, and then to lift up our eyes and behold the present condition of that race, to see that the prophecies of Scripture have been fulfilled in a manner which it was not possible for human sagacity to have foreseen, or for mere human power to have accomplished. "Men are sometimes disposed to think, that if they could see a miracle wrought in their own sight, they would believe the gospel without delay, and obey it unreservedly. They know not their own hearts. 'If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead.' But in the whole range of prophecy now fulfilling before their eyes, they have in fact a series of divine interpositions, not precisely of the nature of miracles, in the sense of brief, and instant, and visible suspensions of the laws of nature, but evidently so in the sense of supernatural interference, in the rise and fall of cities, and nations, and empires, in the arrangement of time and circumstances, in that wonderful display of infinite foreknowledge and infinite power, apparent in the control of the wills of unnumbered free and accountable agents to a certain result."†

\* Philosophical Essays.

† Wilson's Lectures.

16. Fourthly, There never has been any other religion but that of the Bible sustained by prophecy. The sacred penmen alone appealed to the events of thousands of years after their own time as witnesses of their having been sent from God ; and thus left it to the omniscience and omnipotence of the Most High to authenticate the truth of their claims. The alleged auguries and oracles of pagan nations, produced, not as evidence of a revelation from God, but for the avowed purpose of satisfying trivial curiosity, or to aid the designs of some military or political leader, are not worthy of serious consideration. At an early period of the Christian dispensation, they fell into utter contempt with the more enlightened heathen. The writers of the Bible alone have appealed to the evidence of prophecy,—of prophecy delivered from the beginning of the world,—in attestation of the truth of that religion which they were authorized to promulgate : and by this evidence, peculiar to themselves, they have proved, that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

17. Fifthly, Fulfilled prophecy is itself proved to be a revelation from God. But this occupies a large portion of the Scriptures. It begins in the third chapter of Genesis, and it does not end till the last chapter of the New Testament. Prophecy was first addressed to the transgressors after the fall ; was transmitted through Enoch to Noah. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were guided and encouraged by its voice. It spake by Moses of that Great Prophet who was afterwards to arise like unto himself ; and described the history of the Jewish people to the present and to far-distant times. After him appeared Samuel and David, Elijah and Elisha, whose prophetic annunciations form a part of the inspired record. Among the prophets who arose in succession afterwards, were Isaiah, who described in glowing language the glories of Messiah's reign—and Jeremiah, who mourned in plaintive strains the desolations of his country—and Ezekiel and Daniel, Haggai and Zechariah, who prophesied of the sacrifice and kingdom of the Redeemer, and of the events connected with that kingdom till the end of time. This long line of prophets terminated with Malachi, who closed the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament, with the annunciation of the coming of the forerunner of the Messiah, in the spirit and power of Elijah. At length the Great Prophet, to whom all preceding prophets bare witness, appeared, for the purpose of verifying in himself the continuous prophetic



revelation from the beginning of the world. He was followed by Paul, who forewarned the church of "the man of sin, the son of perdition, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." John closed the canon of Scripture with the sublime predictions contained in the Apocalypse,—which describe the future progress of Christ's kingdom, and which extend to the consummation of all things. Thus, we have a large portion of Scripture, consisting of prophecy that has been fulfilled, and which is now fulfilling, and which was delivered to mankind during a period of upwards of four thousand years.

I shall now make a few observations on some of the particulars to which I have referred.

18. (I.) With regard to the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures which apply to Christ alone. It might be expected that predictions which were delivered during the successive ages that intervened from the time when the first prophecy was uttered in the garden of Eden till Malachi the last of the prophets, would differ widely in imagery and in clearness. But while it was necessary that they should all be so obscure before the occurrence of the events to which they referred, as not to derange the order of human affairs, they appear so clear after their accomplishment, as manifestly to have described the things to which they relate.

19. It ought here to be recollected, that Christ is the great theme of prophecy from the beginning of divine revelation; that the predictions which refer to him are numerous, definite, and particular; and that they point out with perfect exactness a variety of minute circumstances as to times, places, and properties. To Jesus all the holy prophets since the world began give witness: yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of his days. They indeed occasionally allude to other subjects, but it is chiefly for the purpose of establishing their testimony regarding him. They often foretold events that were near, and that affected those to whom they related, as well as the condition of their country, that their accomplishment might produce confidence in the prophetic intimations which referred to the coming and kingdom of Christ. When, for example, Isaiah assured Hezekiah of deliverance from Sennacherib, and when by means altogether unlooked for, the prediction received an immediate accomplishment; when God

added fifteen years to his life, as the prophet foretold, and gave him the sign which he had asked on the dial of Ahaz;—we cannot doubt that Hezekiah, as well as many others, were thus prepared to rely on the truth of all the prophecies which they heard Isaiah deliver respecting the distant advent and glories of the Messiah.

20. Two thousand years after it was declared, in the hearing of our first parents, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, the promise was made to Abraham which restricted the descent of the predicted Deliverer to his family. It was renewed to Isaac and Jacob: "In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Four hundred years afterwards a prophecy still more explicit concerning the Messiah was delivered by Moses: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." Five hundred years after the time of Moses the following striking predictions are delivered to David, a representative and type of the promised Saviour:—"I have made a covenant with my chosen; I have sworn unto David my servant: Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations; my mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. His throne shall endure as the sun before me; it shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.—The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.—The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath."

21. But in place of quoting the numerous prophecies in the Old Testament which directly refer to Christ, it may suffice that we briefly refer to those that point out the time of his coming; the place of his birth, and family from which he should descend; his manner of life, character, miracles, sufferings, rejection by the Jewish nation, death, resurrection, ascension; and the design and effect of his appearance.

22. The time of his coming is pointed out with the greatest exactness, and by a variety of concurring circumstances is fixed

to the period when our Lord appeared. As early as the patriarchal age, these were described with singular minuteness in the well-known prophecy delivered by Jacob: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." It is universally admitted, that the coming of the Messiah is here predicted under the name of Shiloh. By sceptre is meant authority and power to execute and enforce the established laws. The meaning therefore is, that Judah should not cease from being a body politic or commonwealth, having a power of government or jurisdiction within itself, until Messiah come; that Judah was to retain within itself both the government and the peculiar law of Judaism, long after the separate governments of the other tribes should have completely disappeared; that the government or sceptre of Judah should thus be upheld or protected till Shiloh should come,—and that from that period, and not till then, the sceptre should depart from Judah.

23. This prediction received an exact and complete accomplishment. After Judea became a Roman province, the Jews continued to administer their own laws, both civil and religious. But after Messiah had appeared, and had fulfilled in his life and death the predictions of the prophets, and after the apostles, in obedience to the command of their divine Master, had preached the gospel over the Roman empire, the Jewish state was finally dissolved. At the termination of forty years from the death of Christ, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and caused the Jews no longer to exist as a body politic by scattering them over the face of the world. From that era, in which they were judicially expelled from Judea, though they have been preserved distinct from every other people, they have not been ranked among the nations; and they still abide without power to execute their laws, without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice. How striking is the connexion between this prophecy, delivered two thousand years before the Christian era, and the events which it describes, and to which it applies! Does not its minute and perfect fulfilment incontrovertibly prove that it was uttered by the inspiration of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and that Jesus, in whom it is accomplished, is indeed the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world?—The multitudes which, when the gospel was first promulgated, were made willing to bow to

his sceptre,—the thousands both of Jews and Gentiles who, in succeeding ages, have been added to their number, show that he is the Shiloh to whom the people were to be gathered.

24. The prophet Daniel clearly pointed out the time of the Saviour's coming, by intimating the number of years which were to precede his arrival. He still farther marks the exact period of his appearance, by connecting with his death the complete destruction of the temple, and the final dissolution of the Jewish polity. "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." This prediction, in explicit language, delivered nearly five hundred years before its fulfilment, fixes the time of the Messiah's appearance to be at the end of threescore and two weeks of years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem: it mentions him by name, and declares that at this period he should be cut off, but not for himself; that soon after this event the Jewish commonwealth would be subverted, accompanied with circumstances of peculiar distress; and that this change in the situation of the Jewish people was to be effected by the invasion of a foreign prince. This extraordinary prophecy was exactly fulfilled in all its particulars in regard to time and circumstance. The words of the prophecy are, "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people," that is, seventy weeks of years, or four hundred and ninety years; and from the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, when Ezra went up from Babylon to Jerusalem with commission to restore the government of the Jews, to the death of Christ, is precisely the number of years specified. The prophecy affirms that threescore and two weeks of years should intervene from the rebuilding of Jerusalem till the coming of Messiah: and from the twenty-eighth year of Artaxerxes, when the walls were finished, to the birth of Christ, there were precisely four hundred and thirty-four years, the very number foretold. The prophecy declares that the people of the prince who should invade Judea should in the midst of the week cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of desolations should make the land desolate: and from Vespasian's march into Judea, to the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, was half a week of years, or three years and a half.

25. Thus does this remarkable prophecy, literally fulfilled,



remain a striking memorial of the inspiration of the ancient prophets, and an incontrovertible proof of the truth and divine authority of Christianity. It was impossible that a prediction so precise as to the time and circumstances of the Saviour's appearance should not have produced, wherever the Jewish Scriptures were read, an expectation of the person described. The expectation, accordingly, as we have seen, was general at the time when our Lord appeared; so much so that from the death of Herod the Great to the destruction of the temple, the Jewish history is filled with the names and actions of false Christs and false prophets, who deceived both the Jews and the Samaritans. To show how generally the prophecy of Daniel was understood in regard to the time of the Messiah's arrival, no false Christs ever appeared before this period, and not more than one for five or six centuries after it. Nor do the Jews even at this day deny that the period fixed for the appearance of the Messiah was that which is pointed out by this remarkable prophecy; but while they acknowledge that to have been the time, when, according to their prophecies, he ought to have appeared, they think the sinfulness of their nation has caused his delay.

26. The time of the Saviour's coming was also defined by the prophet Haggai, when he prophesied that he should appear during the existence of the Jewish commonwealth, and before the destruction of the second temple. "I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Thus, it is clearly intimated, that by the coming of Messiah, who is described as the desire of all nations, and by his personal manifestation in his temple, the glory of this latter would greatly exceed that of the former. The promise in regard to peace was so perfectly accomplished, that when he appeared it prevailed over the world.

27. Malachi, the last of the prophets, who prophesied four hundred years before Christ, fixes the time of his appearance by describing the messenger who was to go before him, and certain circumstances characteristic of the dispensation which he should introduce. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the

covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”—“Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.”—“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord ; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.”

28. Isaiah as well as Malachi had prophesied of the messenger who should precede the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elias : and when John the Baptist appeared, he described himself and his office in the very terms which had been employed by the prophets. The agreement between the prophecy and the circumstances in which it was fulfilled is exact and complete. The long succession of prophets from Moses to Malachi had terminated ; and no prophet arose, as was intimated in the concluding words of the Old Testament, till the harbinger of the Messiah appeared. He was promised under the name of Elijah ; and the resemblance between that distinguished prophet and John the Baptist was striking, in regard to the austerity of their lives, their active zeal, their boldness in reproofing sin, and their diligence in labouring to reform their countrymen. The prophecy had declared that a messenger should be sent to prepare the way of the Lord ; and John the Baptist appeared as the precursor of the Messiah, preaching repentance and exhorting the people to believe on him that should come after him. He pointed him out as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world : and as Malachi had foretold of the Messiah, Christ came to the temple at Jerusalem, announced himself as the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world,—the Light ordained to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of the people Israel.

29. It is thus evident, that Christ appeared at the time which prophecy had so clearly marked out for the Messiah's advent. We shall find that the place of his birth, and the line of his descent, are expressly mentioned, and apply to Christ with the most perfect exactness. He was to be of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, and to be born in the town of Bethlehem. “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.—Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment

and justice on the earth; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." About seven hundred years before the appearance of Christ, Micah foretold, in the following words, that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem: "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

30. That Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, and of the house and lineage of David, is certain: and by a wonderful concurrence of circumstances which could only be foreknown to Omniscience, he was born in the town of Bethlehem. Judea having become an appendage of the Roman empire, Augustus, for purposes of state, ordered a general enrolment of its inhabitants. But this decree was to be carried into effect in conformity with the Jewish method of classing the people, and which required that every inhabitant should have his name enrolled, "not in the city where he happened to reside, but in that to which the founder of his house belonged, and which, in the language of the Jews, was the city of his people. By this order, which was totally independent of the will of Joseph and Mary, and which involved in it a decree of the Roman emperor then for the first time issued concerning Judea, and a resolution of the king of Judea to adopt a particular mode of executing that decree, Joseph and Mary are brought from a distant corner of Palestine to Bethlehem. They are brought at a time when Mary would not have chosen such a journey: and Jesus, to their great inconvenience and distress, is born in a stable, and laid in a manger." In this wonderful manner did the providence of God connect the time and place of the birth of Jesus, so as, without the possibility of human contrivance and preparation, to have fulfilled the words of ancient prophecy.

31. As the prophecies respecting the time of the Messiah's appearance, the tribe and family from which he should descend, and the place of his birth, were thus fulfilled in Christ, so were the numerous and minute predictions concerning his life character, offices, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, accomplished in Jesus. He is represented as a partaker of the nature of man, and as possessing, at the same time, equality with God; as being born into the world, and as existing from everlasting. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and

his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever." His ministry was to be characterised by works of power and benevolence: "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing:"—a description of the days of the Messiah to which our Lord refers as verified in regard to himself: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised."

32. Five hundred years before the event, his entrance into Jerusalem, and the circumstances which should attend it, are celebrated by the prophet Zechariah: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." To see how exactly this prediction was verified in Christ, we have only to read the account given by the evangelist of his entrance into Jerusalem:—"And they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon: as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, thy King cometh, sitting on ass's colt.—And as they went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." To show that this prediction did not produce its own accomplishment, the evangelist John relates, that "these things understood not his disciples at the first; but that when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done those things unto him."

33. The Messiah is represented by the prophets as distinguished by his purity, meekness, gentleness, and unostentatious kindness and benevolence. He was to be a righteous person, and to be possessed of every virtue in the highest degree. In these respects he was to be far superior to the sons of men.



“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.—Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. He hath done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his lips.—He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.” In how perfect a manner was this representation of the Messiah verified in Christ. Such was his wisdom, that he spake as never man spake; his compassion, that he went about continually doing good; his purity, that no one could charge him with sin; his humility, that he performed the most stupendous miracles with studied simplicity and unostentation; his peaceable disposition, that when the people would have made him their king, he withdrew into retirement; and his meekness, that he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

34. But while possessing these extraordinary excellences, the Messiah is represented by the prophets as poor and despised, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; as rejected by his own people, and at length condemned to death. “He shall grow up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.—He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death.” How exactly were these predictions fulfilled in Him who, when he came to his own, was not received by them; who, while the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, had not where to lay his head;

and who, after he had long endured the contradiction of sinners, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

35. But in connexion with this deep humiliation, prophecy represented the Messiah as a victorious conqueror, who should rise from the dead, triumph over death, the grave, and all his enemies, and ascend to heaven in glory and majesty. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.—When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.—Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The perfect fulfilment of these predictions in the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ, is obvious and striking.

36. Thus does it appear that Christ, in his character, offices, and salvation, was the subject of prophecy from the earliest dawn of divine revelation through the successive ages of the world, until it was at length manifested to the aged Simeon, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Prophecy became clearer and clearer as this period approached; and described with the minuteness and particularity of historical narration, the life, ministry, redemption, and reign of the Messiah. How vast and magnificent is the prophetic scheme which is thus developed! How wonderful that it should receive its accomplishment in a way that opposed the fondest wishes and hopes of the very people with whom was deposited the sacred book in which this divine scheme is revealed! How wonderful that it should have been fulfilled by the agency of men who were following out their own prejudices and passions; and who, in killing the Prince of life, and crucifying the Lord of glory, verified the long series of predictions which were

written in Moses and in all the prophets concerning him! "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

37. Were we to restrict our attention, in considering the prophecies that refer to the Redeemer, to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the exact fulfilment of its various particulars is amply sufficient to establish the truth of Christianity. The Jews have attempted to evade the difficulties in which the consideration of this chapter has involved them; they have argued, that the prophecy did not relate to one man, but to one people, the Jews, who have been smitten of God for their sins. But the words of the prophet in this chapter,—“He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken,”—are decisive in showing the absurdity of this interpretation.

This remarkable prophecy has not only silenced the Jews, but has been the means of converting unbelievers to the faith of the gospel. The case of the Earl of Rochester, who lived the life of a libertine and atheist, but who died the death “of a penitent Christian,” is well known. The perusal of this chapter, the consideration of its interesting contents, and of their complete fulfilment, operated, through the divine blessing, in leading him to believe on Him who was wounded for his transgressions, and bruised for his iniquities, and by whose stripes he was healed.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE DOUBLE SENSE, OR THE COMPREHENSIVE CHARACTER, OF PROPHECY.

1. BESIDES the direct prophecies of the Old Testament, which were originally intended to apply to Christ alone, there are many predictions which have a double sense or application, which relate primarily to characters and events in the history of the Jews, or of other ancient nations, but which ultimately refer to Christ and to his kingdom.

2. Before entering on the consideration of this class of predictions, I may observe, that infidel writers have attempted, by an unfair representation of them, to assail and subvert Christianity. Collins, in his *Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, published upwards of a century ago, under the professed design of doing real service

to Christianity, by establishing it on a sure and solid foundation, aims at showing that it is unsupported by evidence, and consequently, that it is undeserving of credit.

3. His scheme is this: that our Saviour and his apostles put the whole proof of Christianity, solely and entirely, upon the prophecies of the Old Testament; that if these proofs are valid, Christianity is established upon its true foundation; but if they are invalid, and the arguments brought from thence be not conclusive, and the prophecies cited from thence be not fulfilled, Christianity has no foundation, and is therefore false. Accordingly, he sets himself to show, that the prophecies cited in the New Testament from the Old, in proof of Christianity, four or five of which he particularly considers, are only typical and allegorical proofs; and that allegorical proofs are no proofs, according to scholastic rules; that is, as he plainly intends it, according to the rules of sound reason and common sense. He asserts that the apostles put a new interpretation on the Jewish books, which was not agreeable to the obvious and literal meaning of those books, and was contrary to the sense of the Jewish nation: that Christianity derives all its authority from the Old Testament, and is wholly revealed there, not literally, but mystically and allegorically; and that, consequently, the Old Testament is the sole true canon of Christians. But Christianity derives no real support from Judaism, and therefore must be false.

4. The answer to this scheme is obvious to every one who is acquainted with the evidences of divine revelation. In the first place, its fundamental principle, namely, that the prophecies of the Old Testament are the sole foundation of Christianity, and the only proofs insisted on by our Lord and his apostles in its confirmation, is false. They appealed to the numerous miraculous works which they performed, as furnishing indubitable attestation of their divine mission. These prove that they were sent from God, and that the doctrines which they delivered in his name possess divine authority.

5. Besides, we have already seen that there are prophecies in the Old Testament which apply, not in a secondary, but in their primary sense, to the Messiah, and to the dispensation of the Gospel. We shall now illustrate some of those prophecies which are applicable to Jesus only in a typical and secondary sense; and show that they are not inconsistent with the nature and design of prophecy. We rest the argument from prophecy



upon those predictions which expressly point to the Messiah, and upon that authority which the miracles of Jesus and his apostles gave to them as interpreters of prophecy. And we say, that when their interpretation of those prophecies, which were originally applicable to other events, gives to every expression in them a natural and complete sense, and at the same time coincides with the spirit of those predictions concerning the gospel which are direct, we have the best reason for receiving this further meaning, not to the exclusion of the other, but as the full exposition of the words of the prophet. Nor, when we consider the nature of prophecy as that which came not by the will of man, but that which holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, will it appear that there is anything in the double sense ascribed to a certain class of predictions, unworthy of the wisdom of God, or of his revealed purpose of mercy regarding the human race.

6. We are taught that the redemption of mankind was the great theme of prophecy from the beginning; that the prophets themselves were but imperfectly informed of the meaning and design of their own predictions; that they searched and inquired diligently into their import; and that it was in many instances revealed to them, that their predictions related less to their own times than to ours; and that they were appointed to minister, not for themselves, but for us, the things which are now made known to us by the gospel.

7. It is of importance here to recollect, that the leading characters and events in the Jewish history were designed to furnish typical representations of personages and events in gospel times. This doctrine is expressly taught by the writers of the New Testament; and believing that it is well founded, it affords peculiar evidence of the truth and divine authority of the gospel; as it strikingly illustrates the wisdom and overruling providence of God, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

8. At an early period of the history of the world he selected one people from the rest of mankind, placed them under the direction of an extraordinary providence, and caused the leading characters and events among them to furnish to later ages typical instruction concerning the redemption of the human race through our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. In like manner, the ritual of the Mosaic economy had a designed reference to Christianity. It was the shadow of good

things to come: a system of signs adapted to the existing state of the world, the import of which was better understood by the persons to whom they were addressed than we can easily imagine. Even their reference to revelations, events, and personages, beyond the Jewish dispensation, which is as clearly established as any fact of the same kind can be, the sincere and devout worshippers of every age were more or less qualified to appreciate, when they searched diligently to discover what, and what manner of time, the Spirit which was in their ritual did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. While the blood of the inferior animals, offered in divinely instituted sacrifice, could not take away sins, it served as an emblematical sign of the great atonement to be made for the redemption of the world by the Son of God. The institution of sacrifice, divinely appointed immediately after the fall, and maintained till the Christian era, preserved from age to age the symbols and the knowledge of salvation. At length He appeared to whom these symbols had a reference; and who, by his atoning death, finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. It is indeed impossible for a candid mind to examine the correspondence between the facts contained in the history of the gospel, and the representation of them exhibited, as is affirmed, in the typical ordinances of the Mosaic economy, without being satisfied, "that the dispensation of the Gospel was in preparation ever since the fall of man; and that the institutions established among the Jews were originally designed to transmit to us, by many unconscious and unwilling witnesses, the most animated images and anticipations both of the substance and of the effects of Christianity,—glorious monuments, raised on the history of the world, of the manifold wisdom and grace of God, 'hid from ages and generations, and now made manifest to the saints.'"

10. The doctrine of types, and of typical prophecy, is in perfect accordance with the constitution of the human mind. For the language of signs is as natural to man as the language of words, or of articulate sounds. In the earlier stages of society, signs of various descriptions are employed to denote things, and they are so used chiefly because they are calculated forcibly to express the intended signification, as well as to supply the poverty of language. Hence the origin of meta-

phorical diction and of picture-writing. Before language is sufficiently copious in words, there is a necessity felt of extending them beyond their literal sense; and the analogical or metaphorical signification is continued after the necessity which gave rise to it ceases to have existence. There is also a propriety in the use of such language, inasmuch as it addresses the mind through the medium of the senses, and thus more effectually conveys its meaning to the heart. Hence the frequent use of parable, which is a similitude taken from things natural in order to instruct us in things spiritual.

11. Hence also the language of signs or of types. They have been divided into three classes—legal, prophetic, and historical. The sacrifices, festivals, and modes of worship divinely appointed to the Jews, were of the first class. Historical types are numerous, and are the characters, actions, and circumstances of persons recorded in the Old Testament, so ordered by Providence as to be exact prefigurations of the characters, actions, and circumstances of persons under the gospel dispensation.

12. When the prophets prefigured or signified things future by means of external symbols, the symbols which they employed are termed prophetic types. The subjugation of a people is signified by making bonds and yokes. The dispersion and restoration of the Jews are intimated by the valley full of dry bones. The calling of the Gentiles is denoted by the descent of a vessel, let down from heaven, containing all manner of living creatures. Under the veil of an allegory or parable the prophets sometimes delivered predictions. We have a beautiful and striking example of this in the forty-fifth Psalm, which in many respects resembles the Song of Solomon, and which in language of great force, tenderness, and occasional sublimity, describes the love and union of the Redeemer and his church under the similitude of a marriage.

13. It is affirmed by God himself that this was one of the ordinary ways by which he communicated his will to Israel through the prophets: "I have spoken by the prophets: and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets." The prophet often explained the import of the type, when the event signified was near; and when he did not, it would appear that the people were generally aware that it was intended for another; from some impropriety in the action, inconsistent with the character of the doer, or of him

to whom it was immediately ascribed, they were led to think it looked farther, and were desirous of ascertaining its meaning. "Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us that thou dost so?" was their form of expostulation with Ezekiel, who remarks of them in another place, that they used to say of him, "Ah! Lord, doth he not speak parables?" It is therefore certain that the prophets did describe the character, office, and reign of the Messiah in other persons, whom they designed as types of him. There was nothing incongruous in this, or inconsistent with the nature of prophecy, or the constitution of human nature. Why might they not in the persons of others foretell the actions, the sufferings, the mediatorial offices, and the sayings of the Redeemer? Is it not certain that they foretold many things that should be done and suffered in future times by some of the princes of Judah, by the body of the Jewish people, and by the surrounding nations? No good reason can be alleged why they should not in the manner alluded to have described the glories of Him who has been so fully witnessed to by the law and the prophets.

14. On the contrary, the best reasons can be assigned why the prophets were in some cases directed to conduct their ministry by a method which was necessarily accompanied with some degree of obscurity. For the nature of prophecy requires that it should not be so clear as to encroach on the present order of providence, or on the free agency of men. On this, and on other grounds, the prophets were moved to conceal much of what was intended for the Messiah in types and allusions; to pre-signify spiritual things in earthly and temporal expressions, and under the terms of several parts of worship in the Jewish religion, denote other things analogous to them in the Christian. These prophecies were to remain in that state of comparative obscurity till the days of their accomplishment began to dawn, and by attention to the style of Scripture, and comparing the less clear and typical with other oracles more express and direct, men were enabled to explain the scope of them.

15. It is no real objection, for example, that the prophecies originally intended to have a double meaning, are not recorded according to any rule, or arranged in any order which human invention could have devised. It is admitted that they are scattered through every part of the Old Testament Scriptures, and that many of them have no perceptible reference to each



other. They are frequently found as detached clauses in a writing which relates to other subjects; and are distinguished as genuine predictions of Christianity, either by their direct information of the New Testament, or by their manifest relation to the events to which they were ultimately intended to apply.

16. But a good reason may be assigned for this insulated form in which the predictions alluded to are to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures. When a prediction was intended to have an ultimate as well as a primary signification, it is evident that the place assigned to it in the record must have been regulated, not by its remote, but by its first application. It must have stood in its natural order in the history or writing of which it makes a part, and could not have been otherwise placed, without losing its original meaning and design. It was as essential to the spirit of prophecy that every prediction should have been clearly connected with the events to which it primarily related, as that its ultimate application should not have been permitted to interfere with the ordinary course of human affairs, or with the free agency of mankind.

17. The existence of such prophecies in the Jewish record, from the commencement to the close of the ancient dispensation—the certainty of their primary accomplishment, and, at the same time, their exact correspondence, in their secondary interpretation, to the events to which the New Testament has applied them, supposing these facts to be admitted—forms a striking argument for the truth of divine revelation. I do not pretend to say that prophecies of the double sense furnish an argument of the same force with prophecies on the same subjects which have only a single and uniform meaning; but I affirm, that when a long series of prophecies, which have this double application, is united to a similar succession of prophecies, which exclusively relate to the same events, and uniformly bear on the same points, they must add greatly to the weight of the general conclusion resulting from both.

18. There may be reasons only known to God himself for his having chosen this as one of the methods to communicate the knowledge of divine things. It might be for the purpose of according with the state of society, and with the nature of the dispensation. “It might be from the depth of things to conciliate reverence to them, and to raise the price of knowing them by the difficulty of attaining unto it: it might be to

improve the understandings of men by exercise, to inflame their desire, to excite their industry, to render them modest and humble; it might be for occasion to reward an honest and diligent study of God's word; it might be to conceal some things from some persons unworthy or unfit to know them, especially from haughty and self-conceited persons."\*

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## CHAPTER IX.

### ON PROPHECY.

1. A THIRD series of prophecies regard the diffusion of the gospel and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. It was distinctly foretold that the law should be abrogated, and that a more spiritual and perfect dispensation should be introduced, adapted to the circumstances of all nations, and which should embrace both Jews and Gentiles.

2. The imperfection of the Mosaical economy rendered the gospel dispensation necessary. This imperfection did not consist in its being unsuited to the end for which it was instituted, but in its being only a part of the revelation of God's purpose of redeeming love and mercy. It was specially designed for one nation, and intended to preserve Israel separate from every other people. But in the fulness of time, when the Gentiles were to be called to the same privileges with the Jews, it was necessary that the ordinances of Judaism should be superseded, and that others more simple in their nature, and adapted to the circumstances of all mankind, should be appointed in their room. The institutions of the Mosaic economy, though significant, were burdensome, and tended to engender a spirit of bondage; those of the gospel are few in number, spiritual in their nature, and accordant with that spirit of adoption which approaches unto God with filial confidence. The former were chiefly confined to one people; the latter, like the blessings of salvation, are alike designed for men of all nations.

3. It is true, the Jews were averse to believe that the ordinances of the law were to be superseded by the coming of the Messiah. While they looked to its numerous ceremonies and splendid festivals, they persuaded themselves, that as they had been divinely appointed they should never terminate. The rich and glowing diction in which the prophets described the triumphs of Messiah's reign, they understood as implying not

\* Barrow, vol. ii. p. 363.

the abrogation but the extension and perpetuity of the law; and they were hence led to anticipate deliverance from every foreign yoke, and universal glory and dominion. Nor were even those of them who embraced Christianity altogether free for some time from this erroneous prepossession. The apostles themselves appear to have been somewhat under its influence during the ministry of our Lord; for when he told them that all things that were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man should be accomplished, that he should be delivered unto the Gentiles, and should be mocked and spitefully entreated, that they should scourge him and put him to death, and that he should rise again the third day; we are informed that they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken.

4. Even after the planting of the Christian church, the Jewish converts were slow to believe that the rites of the law were totally annulled. It is clear from the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistle to the Galatians, that some of them contended that the Gentile Christians also were equally bound in conscience to observe the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation. The more violent even went so far as to insist on making the observance of the law a condition of justification, without which the merits of the Redeemer could not be available to salvation. Against a principle subversive of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, the apostle Paul strenuously contended. "I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

5. Notwithstanding these erroneous and fondly cherished sentiments, the introduction of the gospel dispensation by the Messiah, together with its spiritual nature and universal extent, were made the subject of numerous and explicit predictions. I can here refer only to a few of them. The prophet Jeremiah, in a passage quoted by the apostle Paul, clearly intimates the change which should be effected by the coming of the Redeemer,

and the effects which should result from it. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake:—But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."\*

6. It was clearly foretold that the gospel should proceed from Jerusalem; and that, while it would be rejected by a considerable proportion of the Jews, it would rapidly be extended far beyond the confines of Judea. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.†—He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.‡—The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed." It is unnecessary to say how perfectly these prophecies were fulfilled in the events of the first age of the gospel dispensation.

7. But the predictions regarding the diffusion of the gospel among heathen nations, and the great enlargement of the Christian church, claim particular attention. At the time when these prophecies were delivered, mankind, with the exception of the inhabitants of Judea, were debased by gross superstition and idolatry: darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. The nations most advanced in

\* Hebrews viii.

† Isaiah ii.

‡ Ib. viii.



civilization, who had successfully cultivated the useful and ornamental arts, were, in respect to religious knowledge, in a state of extreme ignorance. They were without God, and without hope in the world: and were, if possible, still more licentious in their conduct than the people whom they termed barbarous. It was at that period, when the light of Heaven shone only on the land of Palestine, that a series of prophets during many successive ages foretold the diffusion of divine knowledge over the world; that the Messiah would appear as the Sun of righteousness, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel; that men should be blessed in him, and that all nations should call him blessed. "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth.—For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.—Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.—All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.—He will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.—The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

8. In accordance with these explicit predictions regarding the extent and universality of the Redeemer's kingdom under the gospel dispensation, our Lord commanded his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; to make disciples of all nations; while he promised to be with them alway even unto the end of the world. He assumes in many of his parables that his religion should widely spread—an assumption which was not warranted by the reception which he himself had met with, or by any change in the religious condition of the nations. The prevailing superstitions were firmly established, being closely connected with the civil constitutions of kingdoms, supported by the authority of the magistrate, and powerful by the prepossessions and passions of the people. It was while spiritual death thus reigned over

the world, that Jesus predicted, in conformity with ancient prophecy, that his religion should extend, and become universal. "The kingdom of heaven," he said, "is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." In another parable, he describes the very way in which the gospel should extend its influence—not by compulsion, but by silent persuasion; insinuating its renovating power into the hearts of mankind, so as gradually to produce a change of views and feelings, and effecting a moral improvement on the habits, customs, and laws of nations. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

9. But our Lord predicted not merely the wide diffusion and permanent establishment of his religion in the world: he also fixed the time in which this remarkable prophecy should be fulfilled. This gospel of the kingdom, said he, shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end of the Jewish state come. From the death of our Lord to the subversion of the Jewish polity and destruction of Jerusalem, were forty years; and there is ample evidence that the gospel was preached before the termination of that period throughout the whole of the Roman empire. On the day of Pentecost three thousand Jews were converted, who had been assembled at Jerusalem out of all nations: and after returning to their respective homes, they would circulate the report of what they had seen and heard. After the death of Stephen, persecution scattered abroad the disciples of Christ, through the regions of Judea and Samaria; and they travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch; and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed. The apostle Paul himself preached the gospel and planted churches from Jerusalem to Illyricum, a distance of two thousand miles. He preached the gospel in Rome, the capital of the world, where, as Tacitus informs us, there was a great number of Christians: and from the imperial city the glad tidings of the kingdom of God were conveyed to all nations. It is indeed admitted, that before the end of the period assigned by our Lord for the fulfilment of his prophecy, Scythia on the north, India on the east, Gaul and Egypt on the west, and Ethiopia

on the south, had received the doctrine of Christ. It is alleged on good grounds, that in Britain, which was then regarded as the extremity of the earth, the gospel was preached before the destruction of Jerusalem. The prediction of our Lord, therefore, was literally accomplished; and its accomplishment furnishes a striking proof of his prophetic Spirit.

10. But several of his prophecies, without fixing a period to their fulfilment, refer generally to the success and to the ultimate universality of the gospel. They reiterate the sentiments contained in the prophecies of the Old Testament in regard to the great extent of Christianity—an extent which is represented by an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. The rapid and astonishing success of the gospel is the subject of historical testimony. We have seen its progress during the first forty years after the death of Christ; and Tertullian, at the end of the second century, remarks in his *Apology*: “Are there not multitudes of us in every part of the world? It is true we are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your towns, islands, castles, camps, courts, palaces, senate, forum. We leave you only your temples.”—“While the Roman empire was invaded,” as the historian of its Decline and Fall observes, “by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men; grew up in silence and obscurity; derived new vigour from opposition; and finally erected the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning, as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans, it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and, by means of their colonies, has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.”

11. These events are a striking fulfilment of ancient prophecy. Omniscience alone, however, could have foreseen and could have predicted their occurrence. How could any mere man have foretold them centuries before the introduction of the gospel dispensation; when the pure and sublime doctrines of the gospel

were so far beyond the reach of the wisest and the best of uninspired men? It was in the highest degree improbable that the idea of a universal religion would have been cherished by persons who were separated from all other nations by the Mosaic institutions, and who were accustomed to regard the Gentile tribes with supercilious contempt; and even if the idea had been indulged, how could they have hoped without literature or philosophy, and in the face of the most inveterate prejudices, to have carried it into effect? Who but the omniscient God could have foretold, with absolute certainty, a thousand years before the event, that a new dispensation of religion would be introduced by the Messiah—a religion opposed to paganism, which would require purity of heart, as well as holiness of conduct—a religion destitute of every secular advantage, protected by no authority, assisted by no art, and not enforced by eloquence; advocated by twelve men, poor and illiterate, who triumphed over the most determined opposition, and through whose instrumentality the word of God grew mightily and prevailed? The literal fulfilment of the prophecies, which had so accurately described these extraordinary events, proves that they originated with that God before whose omniscient view all things are naked and open.

12. It is true, the gospel is not at present known to all nations. The earth is not, according to the prediction, full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. But it is obvious, from the facts to which I have alluded, as well as from the triumphs which Christianity has achieved in our own day, that the fulfilment of the prophecy is in progress; and that we have the surest grounds to hope that the kingdoms of this world will, at no distant period, become “the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.—For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

13. According to my classification of the prophecies, the fourth series are those which relate to the Jews in particular. The designs which this people were intended to subserve in the great scheme of providence, give to the leading events in their history a transcendent importance. They were made the subject of prophecy from the time in which God entered into covenant with their ancestor Abraham; and their constant experience of the fulfilment of prophecy, with regard to their



own condition, led them to confide in the testimony of the prophets, when their predictions referred to surrounding nations or to events in distant futurity. While they had the evidence furnished by events which affected themselves or their country for the inspiration of the prophets, they could not doubt that they spoke under the immediate and infallible direction of God, when they represented the transactions of distant ages, and the glories of the Messiah's reign.

14. The prophecies which relate to the Jewish nation, ought, it is obvious, to accomplish the same end in regard to us—namely, to produce the most perfect conviction of the truth and divine authority of Christianity. For though they do not refer directly to the gospel, yet as they were delivered by the same prophets who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, they serve in the fullest manner to establish their inspiration. If the history of the world prove that their numerous prophecies regarding the Jewish people have been fulfilled, and are now fulfilling, do we not hence derive a pledge of the certain accomplishment of all their other prophetic intimations?

15. Moses prophesied to the Jews that as God had entered into covenant with them, and had become in a peculiar sense their King and their God, their firm observance of his law would be rewarded with temporal blessings, while their violation of it would be punished with temporal calamity. This remarkable prediction could only be fulfilled by the continued and extraordinary interposition of God. Our experience informs us that this is contrary to the established course of things. We know that it often fares better in the present state with the wicked than with the righteous; and that no human magistracy, however desirous, can possibly reverse this order. Yet the prophets expressly foretold the Jews that this reversed order of things, according to which the righteous would here be invariably rewarded, and the wicked be invariably punished, would be fixed among them. "It shall come to pass, if ye hearken unto these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: and he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people.

I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit; and your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. But if ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant; I also will do this unto you,—ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it: And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies.—I will bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant.” A special promise was given of protection and safety during the three annual festivals. “Thrice in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders. Neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.”\*

16. These prophecies of future good or of future evil could only be fulfilled by a miraculous providence. But that they were constantly fulfilled till the Babylonish captivity—that is, during a period of almost nine centuries—is an acknowledged fact. It is admitted that from that date the extraordinary providence which these prophecies required for their accomplishment somewhat ceased to operate; and that though the Jewish people were afterwards, as they still are, under the special providence of God, that providence did not so visibly interpose for the purpose of bestowing temporal rewards on the obedient, and temporal punishment on the disobedient. From that era, indeed, the disobedience of the Jews far exceeded their observance of the divine law; and hence the reason why the judgments inflicted were more remarkable than the number of temporal blessings which were enjoyed.

17. The Babylonish captivity, as well as the deliverance of the Jews, and their return into their own land, were expressly foretold by the prophets. Isaiah, two hundred years before the event, described the distress and ruin which would befall them on account of their extreme wickedness. He also represents the Almighty as calling on their future deliverer by name;† as commissioning him, while unconscious of his guidance and assistance, to execute his sovereign will in the restoration of his people. The prophecy was delivered long before Cyrus was in existence; and its fulfilment required the

\* Deut. vii. 12 to the end: xi. 22—26. Exod. xxxiv. 23, 24. † Isa. xlv.

occurrence of events in a very high degree improbable, namely, the union of the Medes and Persians, and the conquest of the Assyrian empire, then at the summit of its glory. But all the events which the prophecy so minutely foretold were accomplished. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight. I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord that maketh all things: that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."

18. The leading events in the history of the Jews, including their expulsion from Canaan by the Romans, their dispersion over the face of the world, the calamities which have constantly pursued them, and their preservation as a distinct people, were minutely described by Moses upwards of three thousand years ago. He foretold the multiplied provocations and apostasies of Israel; and that they should advance in wickedness till they should rival Sodom and Gomorrah.\* That they attained to that guilty distinction at the time of Josephus, is affirmed by that historian. They were, says he, a more atheistical generation than the inhabitants of Sodom. There was no act of wickedness that was not committed: nor can any one imagine any thing so bad that they did not do; endeavouring, publicly as well as privately, to excel one another both in impiety towards God, and in injustice towards man.

19. The judgments of God, in consequence of this great wickedness, are denounced by Moses in terms which evidently refer, not only to the Babylonish captivity, but to the subversion of their polity by the Romans, and to their subsequent dispersion. The language employed reminds us of the predictions of our Lord concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. All the judgments with which this people had been previously

\* Deut. xxix.

visited were light compared with those which were inflicted after they had filled up the measure of their iniquity by rejecting and crucifying the Redeemer. The description given by Moses of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the dispersion of the Jewish people, is almost as minute as that of Christ; and when we compare the event with the prediction, we behold a striking fulfilment. The Jewish legislator distinctly alludes to the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, to the calamities occasioned by it, the dreadful destruction which followed it, and the judicial expulsion of the inhabitants of Judea from the land of their fathers. "I will scatter you among the heathen, and draw out a sword after you,—and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.—The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young.—And they shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high-fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst throughout all thy land.—And ye shall be plucked from off the land: and the Lord will scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other;—and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind—and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life."\*

20. In how striking and awful a manner have these prophecies been fulfilled! Even the unnatural and revolting scenes that took place during the siege are alluded to with sufficient clearness. "The tender and delicate woman, which would not adventure to set the soles of her feet upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter." According to the enumeration of Josephus, 1,300,000 perished. Nearly one hundred thousand were led into captivity, and sold for slaves; and multitudes were sent to amphitheatres throughout the Roman empire, to contend with savage beasts, and otherwise to suffer death. In the Roman armies which destroyed Jerusalem were men of all nations, who led captive into their respective countries the

\* Deut. xxviii. 37 to the end.



unhappy people whom they conquered. The Jews have continued ever since in a state of dispersion, and wanderers over the face of the earth. In every country they have been treated as aliens, and have been oppressed and persecuted. Without a home, without a government of their own to afford them protection, they are scattered among all nations, monuments of the inspiration of the prophets who, at so early a period, denounced the judgments under which they are now suffering. If prophecy had declared that they should be scattered among the nations, even from one end of the earth unto the other, is it not the fact, that they are found in every country in the world? They have even been heard of in regions which the European traveller cannot reach—in the very interior of Africa.

21. They have often, since their expulsion from Judea, been persecuted from one city to another, and from kingdom to kingdom. Councils pronounced excommunication against those who should favour them, or hold friendly intercourse with them; and decreed that their children should be taken from them, and brought up in monasteries. In a former age, the Spanish government enacted that all Jews should either change their religion or quit the country in three months; and we are informed that in consequence three hundred thousand went away on foot in one day, not knowing where to go. Many perished by famine and pestilence, many were sold for slaves, many were drowned, and many were burned in the ships that were set on fire. They were everywhere, says Hallam, the objects of popular insult and oppression, frequently of a general massacre. A time of festivity to others was often the season of mockery and persecution to them. A series of alternate persecution and intolerance was borne by this extraordinary people with an invincible perseverance. Philip Augustus released all Christians in his dominions from their debts to the Jews, reserving a fifth to himself. He afterwards expelled the whole nation from France. In no country were their sufferings greater at one time than in England, where they were treated with extreme cruelty and oppression. After they had endured the exactions of their plunderers in successive ages, Edward I. seized the whole of their property, and then banished them the kingdom. By this measure many thousands were reduced to extreme misery, and compelled to wander in a state of great destitution. Wherever they had gone in search of a home, they found, during many ages after their expulsion from

Judea, no place in which they might rest; and according to the prophecy, they were oppressed and spoiled evermore. They had become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations. They have been despised and persecuted alike by Christians, Mohammedans, and Heathens.

22. But the most remarkable prophecy regarding the Jews is that which assures them of being preserved as a separate people. This prophecy is twice delivered by Jeremiah in these words: "Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee." A similar prediction was delivered by Amos. "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord: for, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."

23. These predictions have been literally fulfilled. The oppressors of the Jews—the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Romans—have long been extinct as independent nations. Nor can their posterity be distinguished from the other families of mankind. But the Jews, though dispersed among all nations, are not confounded with them: they are a distinct people, known as separate from every other. They retain in every quarter of the globe the distinctive characters, the usages, and the religion of the Jews. They are in every land recognised as the same people—the same as when they were restored from Babylon; the same as when Vespasian, at the head of a Roman army, besieged Jerusalem. All other ancient nations have been mingled and lost in the common mass of mankind; but they are now as much a known and separate people as they were three thousand years ago.

24. This circumstance is truly astonishing when we consider the cruel oppression which, as a people, they have endured from all nations. They have been subjected to exaction and persecution; and yet they have been preserved to verify the prediction—"Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee." In spite of the exterminating measures of pagan and antichristian Rome, of Mohammedan and heathen nations, they still survive, a separate people; unchanged amid the revolutions of ages, unaltered by the successive extinction of empires. They remain, notwithstanding the edicts of kings and councils which have been issued for their destruction.

Though the rulers and the people of almost all nations—Pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian—have united for the ruin of this extraordinary people, they have been unable to accomplish their design. The bush of Moses, surrounded with flames, has always burnt without being consumed. They are preserved as a monument in the midst of the nations, to attest the truth of the law and the prophets, and to prove, in opposition to their own wishes, the divine authority of that religion which they have rejected.

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## CHAPTER X.

THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY IN REGARD TO BABYLON—TYRE—OUR  
LORD'S PREDICTIONS CONCERNING JERUSALEM.

1. THERE are in the Bible numerous and striking predictions regarding other nations as well as the Jews. Under this head I shall only mention two or three examples. Of Babylon, the most distinguished city of ancient times, while in the plenitude of its glory, the voice of prophecy pronounced its doom—and pronounced it one hundred and sixty years before it happened. "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.—The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.—Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate.—Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there: but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces."\*

2. This remarkable prophecy has, during many centuries, been literally fulfilled. Babylon has become a possession for

\* Isa. xiii. 1—22.

the bittern, and pools of water. It has been swept with the besom of destruction. The site of this once celebrated city is now the abode of "doleful creatures."

3. Of Tyre, which was once the emporium of the world, and the city of perhaps the most industrious and active people ever known, Ezekiel prophesied:—"I will scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea."\* The literal fulfilment of this prophecy is certified by Shaw, Bruce, and Volney. The latter says, that "the whole village of Tyre contains only fifty or sixty poor families, who live obscurely on the produce of their little ground and a trifling fishery."

4. Prophecy had declared concerning Egypt, while that kingdom was powerful and wealthy, that the pride of her power should come down; that her land, and all that was therein, should be made waste by the hand of strangers; that there should be no more a prince of the land of Egypt, and the sceptre of Egypt should depart away.† It is unnecessary to say how fully this prophecy has been fulfilled. From the time when that kingdom was conquered by the Persians, 350 years before Christ, to the present day, Egypt has been governed by strangers, and every effort to raise a native to the throne has been defeated. "Deprived, twenty-three centuries ago," to use the words of Volney, a witness to the fulfilment of prophecy, "of her natural proprietors, she has seen her fertile fields successively a prey to the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Georgians, and at length the race of Tartars, distinguished by the name of Ottoman Turks. The Mamlouks, purchased as slaves, and introduced as soldiers, soon usurped the power, and elected a leader. If their first establishment was a singular event, their continuance is not less extraordinary. They are replaced by slaves brought from their original country. The system of oppression is methodical. Everything the traveller sees or hears reminds him he is in the country of slavery and tyranny."

5. We shall conclude our observations on prophecy by briefly alluding to the predictions of our Lord, the great Prophet and Light of the world. He foretold his own sufferings, death, and resurrection; the rapid spread of the gospel, the persecutions of his disciples, the rejection of the Jews, and the bringing in of the Gentiles. But his prophecies concerning

\* Ezek. xxvi.

† Ezek. xxx. 6-13.



the destruction of Jerusalem are peculiarly full, minute, and impressive. Is it certain that these prophecies were published before the events to which they relate? Of this we have full and decisive evidence. John, the only evangelist who wrote after the event, has not alluded to it; while Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who, according to the unanimous judgment of the early ages of the Christian dispensation, published their gospels prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, narrate the prophecies regarding it at great length, as well as the time in which they were delivered. It is admitted that the Gospel of Matthew in particular was published about the eighth year after the death of Christ; and as the destruction of Jerusalem took place in the seventieth year of the Christian era, the prophecies in relation to it were published by Matthew about thirty years, and were declared by our Saviour about thirty-seven years, before their fulfilment. The fact was so well established, and universally acknowledged, that none of the enemies of Christianity in the early centuries attempted to deny it. Besides, had the three evangelists by whom the prophecies are recorded written after the subversion of the Jewish polity, it would have been scarcely possible for them, however artful, not to have dropped a word in allusion to their knowledge of its having already taken place. When, in addition to these circumstances, it is remarked that Christ is represented, in delivering this prophecy, to have given particular charges to his disciples to save themselves by flight from the calamities of the siege, and to have directed them, when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies, to depart from the city, we surely must own that the evidence against the supposition of a fabrication after the event is strong and satisfactory.

6. That this remarkable prophecy was fulfilled is attested by an eye-witness of the tragical event to which it relates—"a witness who, having been first a leader among the troops of Judea, and then a prisoner to the Roman commander, and continually kept about his person for the sake of his services, cannot be accused of having written without accurate information." Josephus, to whom I refer, composed his book at Rome, and presented it to the Emperor Vespasian, and to his son Titus, who had commanded at the siege of Jerusalem, and who may therefore be considered as bearing testimony to its correctness. This is a complete attestation of the Saviour's prophecies by a writer who remained till death an enemy of

Christianity, and who, therefore, could have had no intention, in the events which he has recorded, to verify the prophetic claims of its founder. The prophecy is minute, and so is the narrative that attests its fulfilment.

7. The annunciation of this prophecy must have been disagreeable, and its accomplishment highly improbable. To Jews—who were proverbially attached to their country and its institutions, and who viewed with feelings of pride and complacency the temple which had been rendered venerable by the piety of successive generations, and which they regarded as the tabernacle of the Most High—no announcement could have been more revolting than that which foretold its destruction. We may therefore be assured, that a man, whose only or main object was popularity, never would have made it; nor, even on the supposition that his superior sagacity might have foreseen the probable termination of the Jewish polity, would he have hazarded his credit on a conjecture, whose fulfilment was in the highest degree unlikely. For not only did the Romans, who were the agents by whom it was accomplished, deviate, in this instance, from their usual mode of acting towards conquered nations; not only did they treat the Jews with a severity never used to any other people, and which human reason could not therefore anticipate; but such was the strength of the citadel, that, according to Josephus, the general of the Roman army acknowledged that it was the hand of God that forced them to relinquish fortifications which no human power could have overcome.

8. The prophecy foretold that the destruction of Jerusalem would be preceded by the sufferings of the Christians. "Before all these they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And ye shall be betrayed, both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." It is unnecessary to say how unwelcome these annunciations must have been to men who had so long and so fondly dwelt in imagination on the glories of that temporal dominion which they believed their Master would soon establish; and how injurious they must have proved to the cause of any leader who hoped for success only by flattering the prejudices of his followers. They were all fulfilled before the final overthrow of

the Jewish polity. The prophecy tells us that the disciples of Christ would be persecuted; and we learn from the confession of Saul of Tarsus, that he, during the period referred to, acting by the authority of the chief priests, punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even unto strange cities. The prophecy tells us that they should be cast into prison; and we learn from the testimony of the same witness, that many of the saints, both men and women, he shut up in prison. According to the prediction, they were to be betrayed by their parents and relations; and Tacitus mentions that the Christians were delivered up by their parents, brethren, and kinsfolk; and Josephus gives the same testimony. According to the prophecy, many of the disciples were to be put to death before the destruction of Jerusalem; and authentic history informs us, that in addition to Stephen and James, many thousands were put to death by the sword of persecution.

9. The prophecy foretold the preservation of the Christians from the calamities of the siege. "There shall not a hair of your head perish. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto: for these be the days of vengeance." By the special providence of God, after the Romans had made their first advance toward Jerusalem, they suddenly withdrew in an unexpected, and indeed in an impolitic, manner, at which Josephus expresses his surprise, since the city might then have been easily taken. By this means they gave the signal to the Christians to retire; and they, regarding this as an intimation of the Divine will, fled to Pella, a mountainous country, and to other places beyond Jordan.

10. According to the prophecy, the gospel would be extensively promulgated before the final catastrophe to which it related. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Authentic history informs us, that within the predicted period the gospel was preached to the greater part of the known world; and that Christian churches were planted in almost all the inhabited parts of the earth, in thirty years after the death of Christ.

11. According to the prophecy, extraordinary signs or ap-

pearances and calamities were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem. "Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be in heaven. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Josephus and Tacitus bear testimony to the fulfilment of these predictions.\*

12. In the prophecy, the utter destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem is declared. "Behold," says the Saviour, "the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." We learn from Josephus, that Titus was extremely anxious to save the temple; and that, in a council of his generals, he expressed this to be his determination. But it was the purpose of God that not one stone of this edifice should remain on another; and this purpose, even in opposition to the declared wishes of the chief of the victorious army, was accomplished. "One of the soldiers, moved," says the Jewish historian, "by a divine impetus, caught some burning materials, and thrust the fire in at one of the windows." The fire was observed by Titus, who cried to the soldiers to extinguish it; but they neither regarded his voice nor the beckoning of his hand. When all attempts to preserve it were unavailing, orders were given to demolish to the foundation the city and temple. With the exception of three towers, "the whole circumference of the city was so thoroughly laid even with the ground, by those who dug it up to the foundation, that there was nothing left to make those who came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."† A ploughshare, says the infidel historian who records the decline and fall of the Roman empire, was drawn over the consecrated ground, as a sign of perpetual interdiction.

\* Tacitus' History, b. v. c. 9—13.

† Wars, b. vii. c. 1, sec. 1.



“Zion was ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem became heaps; and the mountain of the Lord as the high places of the forest.” \*

13. The prophecy foretold that there should be “great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be.” The historian informs us, that within the city the fury of the wretched people was so great that they often destroyed one another. In their madness they burned the granaries which were intended for their sustenance, so that, before the siege had lasted two months, they were reduced to the utmost extremities, and the daughters of Jerusalem, whom the Saviour had commanded to weep for themselves and for their children—surrounded by famine, pestilence, and the sword—had recourse to expedients at which nature revolts. As if to make the hand of Providence more visible in these judgments, vast multitudes were assembled from different parts of Judea when the siege began, and were there shut up as it were in a prison, unable to extricate themselves from the visitation. It was partly owing to this circumstance, and also to the dreadful carnage which took place when the city was in the power of the Roman army, that the number of the slain was not less than eleven hundred thousand in Jerusalem. Titus commanded multitudes of this unhappy people to be sent to the different theatres throughout the empire, to be devoured by wild beasts and the sword.

14. According to the prophecy, the Jews were to be dispersed among all nations, and to continue a distinct people. “They shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Our belief in the accomplishment of this wonderful prediction does not altogether depend on historical testimony, since it is receiving its fulfilment at the present moment. Even if historians had not told us that the Jews had been sent into captivity by the command of Titus, we could have had no reason to doubt their state of exile, because we know that this is their condition at the present day; and we learn from themselves, that this has been their condition since the destruction of the temple. They have since then remained in a state of dispersion over the world; they have been hated and oppressed by every other people, and the daughter of Zion still “is afflicted for the multitude of her transgressions;

\* Mich. iii. 12.

her children go into captivity before the enemy; her elders sit upon the ground and keep silence; they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth." And yet, at the present hour, while all other ancient nations have melted away, and are mingled and lost in the kindreds that have succeeded them, they have remained a separate people, and, after the oppressions of eighteen centuries have been in operation to wear them down, they are much more numerous than when they dwelt in the land of Canaan. The same unbelief which blinds their minds must indeed darken his understanding who does not behold, in the preservation of the children of Abraham, in opposition to the common course of the world, and to the powerful and incessant means that have been employed for their destruction, a standing miracle, in attestation of his divine authority and mission, whose prophetic declarations they thus continue so fully to verify.

15. Though there had been no other evidence of the truth of Christianity than the fulfilment of the prophecies to which we have alluded, it would be sufficient to establish its divine authority, and to leave those excuseless and guilty who reject a revelation that bears the signature and seal of Him to whom the future is as the light of noonday. If there have not failed aught of anything which Jesus has spoken; if even at the present hour his sayings are fulfilled in the tyranny which the Gentiles exercise over Judea and Jerusalem, and in the dispersion and distinct preservation of the Jews as a separate people, have we not evidence of a miraculous character of the truth of his claims—evidence so complete and decisive as to leave the unbeliever who turns away in disobedience from this Great Prophet without excuse? The temple and metropolis of Judea have, in accordance with the voice of prophecy, been long since demolished, and the mighty empire which sent forth the executioners of vengeance has also passed away; but the events that have already been accomplished, and that now are addressed to our senses, form a pledge and memorial that the words shall all be fulfilled. "At every step," says a recent traveller, "coming out of the city, the heart is reminded of that prophecy, accomplished to the letter, 'Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.' All the streets are wretchedness, and the houses of the Jews, more especially, are as dung-hills. No expression could have been invented more descriptive of the visible state of Jerusalem, than this single phrase, *trodden*

*down.*"\* "Not a creature is to be seen in the streets," says another traveller, "not a creature at the gates, except now and then a peasant gliding through the gloom, concealing under his garments the fruits of his labour, lest he should be robbed of his hard earnings by the rapacious soldier. The only noise heard from time to time in the city is the galloping of the steed of the desert."†

16. Thus the wonderful prophecies of our Lord have been fulfilled, and are now receiving fulfilment. We may therefore be assured that all his predictions shall be accomplished. "For what reason can we believe, that though they (the Jews) are dispersed among all nations, yet, by a constant miracle, they are kept distinct from all, but for the further manifestation of God's purposes towards them? The prophecies have been accomplished to the greatest exactness, in the destruction of their city, and its continuing still subject to strangers; in the dispersion of their people, and their living still separate from all other people; and why should not the remaining parts of the same prophecies be as fully accomplished in their restoration, at the proper season, when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled?"‡

\* Jowett's Researches, p. 200.

† Chateaubriand.

‡ Newton, vol. ii. p. 336.

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## BOOK VI.

### ON THE INTERNAL AND EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCES OF THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

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#### CHAPTER I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURE AND VALUE OF THIS EVIDENCE—THE PERFECTION AND CONSISTENCY OF GOD'S CHARACTER—THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

1. **THOUGH** the classification of the evidences of Christianity into external and internal is far from being perfectly accurate, its general use renders it inconvenient to discontinue it. It is unwise to disparage the one with the view of exalting the other; because both harmonise together, and, united, strengthen the conviction of the truth and divine authority of revelation. Though the doctrine is sufficiently authenticated by the miracles, a consideration of its nature and tendency may furnish strong and confirmatory evidence of its divine origin. We shall find, accordingly, that the internal evidences furnish numerous, striking, and affecting proofs of the truth of Christianity.

To the consistency of Scripture with itself, and with cotemporary writers, I have already adverted.

2. There is nothing more wonderful in the Bible, or more calculated to impress a reflecting mind, than the perfection and consistency throughout of God's character as there delineated. When we think what the views of the wisest and best informed of mankind, without revelation, have been of the character, attributes, and acts of the Deity, and contrast these views with the original conception with which these are presented in the Bible, we perceive a difference as great as between light and darkness. Yet, though the Bible was written by different persons, and in ages remote from each other, the same original conception of the natural and moral attributes of God, and of his pure and glorious character, is conveyed throughout, without failure in a single instance. This is done, too, with the most perfect ease and artlessness on the part of the writers. In their representations, they appear like men who delineate a character that is familiar to them.

3. But the original conception of the character of the Deity



is sustained, not merely in his sayings, but in his actings. He is presented to our view in the Scriptures as the Supreme Moral Governor of the Universe, who exercises justice mingled with tender mercy—as “a just God and a Saviour.” But is the character of the Governor and Judge, who maintains inviolable the authority of his laws, merged in that of the compassionate and indulgent parent? Are the crimes and impieties of sinful men pitied and overlooked, without any regard to the demands of moral government against which they are committed? This, indeed, would be the representation which men, without the Bible, would give of the procedure of a God of mercy; but it is far different, as given by the writers of that Book. They represent Him, even in the exercise of mercy, as sustaining the authority of inflexible justice—as devising a method for the escape of the sinner from the penal consequences of transgression, but, at the same time, emphatically marking his abhorrence of his sin, and manifesting, with still more impressive effect, his righteousness, as the Supreme Ruler of the world. This character of infinite mercy, and perfect justice, as belonging to the true God, though more fully developed in the Scriptures of the Christian dispensation, is substantially the same, even when God is presented to our view as the King of a particular people, the Israelites. Accordingly, the code of laws, civil and ecclesiastical, which he enacted for that nation—the means which were instituted for promoting piety and virtue, and for repressing impurity and vice, the rewards which were promised, and the punishments which were actually inflicted—were all in accordance with this character of immaculate purity and boundless compassion. The designs also which were to be accomplished by the selection of a particular people, and by keeping them separate from surrounding nations, had a benevolent reference to the ultimate advantage of the whole human race.

4. Nor is the original and peculiar character of Christ less remarkable, as furnishing evidence of his divine mission. Were it my chief aim to exhibit the character given of him by the writers of the New Testament, as contra-distinguished from that of the founders of other religions, I would present to the view of my readers the false prophet of the East yielding in retirement to the impure passions of human nature, and placing himself in public at the head of an army, to promulgate by the sword the tenets of a dark and debasing imposture; and

then I would conduct them to Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of the people; whose life was not only full of beneficence, but of holiness; whose private hours were occupied with acts of sublime and unostentatious devotion; who came from heaven, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; whose object was not to be a temporal prince, but a spiritual and compassionate Saviour; who rose, even while surrounded by sinful men, above the sinful infirmities of that nature of which he made himself partaker; who has left, for the imitation of his followers, a spotless example of charity, and goodness, and righteousness; who, with the possession of a power that made every element and every being subservient to his designs, exercised the most gentle and unresisting virtues towards his enemies; who on the cross raised an imploring petition to Heaven in their behalf; and whom all nature, as well as the Roman centurion, acknowledged to be truly the Son of God.

5. Let us view the character of Christ as it stands opposed to human weakness and infirmity. He, indeed, possessed all the innocent infirmities of the nature which he assumed; he was often weary, hungry, and thirsty; he wept with sorrow, and was fatigued with journeyings like others: but he uniformly manifested, in connexion with this weakness incident to men, the purity and dignity of One who was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. He spread around the weaknesses of our nature the charm of perfect innocency; he made them the means of awakening our sympathies, and of securing them in support of that virtue which he so fully exemplified; and, by bringing them into contact with the grandeur and majesty of his character, he has shown us that it is not they, but sin, that forms the only ground of abasement. There was in himself an exemplification of all righteousness. The virtues which he enjoined on his disciples he himself exhibited in his own living example; and while he spoke of justice and temperance, of meekness and charity, of patience and resignation, there was the conviction in his audience that in him alone was the perfect pattern of every virtue to be found. The spotless holiness by which he was adorned was maintained by an habitual piety towards God, by the exercise of devout affections, and by holding communion with the Eternal Source of light and purity in secret prayer.

Philosophers had often amused themselves with the notion of the descent of perfect virtue from heaven, and dwelling among men in human form: but when the thought was realized, and when Jesus appeared, how exalted above, and different from, every previous anticipation, was the Exemplar of perfect virtue! All perfect as he was, how remote was the character of his perfection from the theoretical speculations of ingenious philosophers! The virtue which he practised was not the virtue of stoicism, but of human nature, in its pure and uncorrupted form; and while, to the view of infinite holiness, it presented nothing but moral loveliness, its grandeur and sublimity were softened to the vision of men by the winning and attractive graces with which it was adorned.

6. The character of Jesus is also presented to our view as opposed to selfishness. For proof of this, it is only necessary to refer the reader to his miracles and doctrines, which show the benignity and compassion of his nature. On the supposition of the validity of his claims, the greatness of his benevolence is beyond all expression. In comparison of his self-denial and generous devotedness, the act of condescension displayed by an earthly monarch who should leave his throne, and lay aside the insignia of his exalted station, and go into some remote and degraded corner of his dominions, entertaining towards its rebellious inhabitants the kind dispositions of a benefactor, and offering pardon to the offender, and all the aids of his power to the needy and helpless—such an act is only that which one fellow-creature may perform for another, and extends not in its effects beyond the present life: but Jesus laid aside the insignia of a heavenly crown, and, that his compassion might be availing for the relief of its objects, he meekly and unresistingly laid down his life for them. Nor is there any aspect of the compassion of Christ more impressive than its manifestation towards his enemies. Even that city which had shed the blood of prophets, which abused and perverted the institutions of religion, which had long resisted the evidence of miracles, and which was about to fill up the measure of its iniquity by putting himself to death, was the object of his pity and the cause of his tears. He whom the threatenings of the rulers could not intimidate—who retained a dignified composure amid the taunts and the tumults of the people; and who, when doomed to an ignominious death, allowed himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter—is presented

to our view as weeping over Jerusalem—weeping with all the innocent weakness of humanity—weeping as if his wonted firmness had forsaken him, as if his mighty power were un-availing. It is the philanthropist, weeping over the sufferings of humanity; it is the patriot, lamenting the desolation of his country, when its enemies would surround the holy city, and lay it even with the ground; and (admitting his divine origin) it is the Saviour's mourning the loss of immortal souls, that he would have saved, had they known or regarded the time of their visitation.

7. The character of Christ is also presented to our view by the writers of the New Testament, in contrast with peevishness and impatience under injury. He was reviled as an impostor, rejected by the people whose spiritual benefit he had laboured to promote, deserted in the hour of distress by those whom he had chosen to be the witnesses of his life and miracles, accused at the bar of a Roman governor, and condemned to the death of a malefactor. How did he act under his sufferings? Did he make any severe remarks on the inconstancy of mankind? Did he show towards his adversaries any desire to wield the power with which he asserted a supremacy over nature for their destruction? On the contrary, when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not. In his deepest humiliation, he manifested a superiority over the sinful passions of human nature. With what meekness and gentleness did he act towards all who opposed themselves to his ministry, as well as towards those who condemned him to die! How mild and benignant was his aspect to Caiaphas, who accused him of blasphemy; to Judas, who sold and betrayed him; to Herod, who added the indignity of derision to his sufferings; to the soldiers, who crowned him with thorns; to Pilate, who commanded him to be scourged and crucified!

8. His character is further presented to our view as opposed to despondency in the most trying circumstances. He was indeed, in the bitterness of his agony, deeply depressed; so much so that his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. But his sorrow was not that of despair; it was not the distress of a mind desponding of the ultimate success of designs which had been long and fondly entertained; for he had told his disciples before-hand, that the objects of his mission could not be attained unless he passed through this scene of humiliation; unless he entered the tomb, and despoiled the



grave of its power. At the bar of the Jewish high-priest, he assured his audience that hereafter they should see Him sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Even on the cross, he assumed language befitting the Lord of life and of the universe, by promising pardon to a dying malefactor, and by appointing him a place with himself in his kingdom.

9. One of the most marked features in the character of Christ was its entire freedom from the influence of worldly motives. This, it must be admitted, even by the enemies of Christianity, was apparent throughout his life. Worldly power, riches, and honour, are the objects which actuate worldly and ambitious minds; but Jesus neither possessed such objects himself, nor proposed them to his followers. On the contrary, he declared that his "kingdom is not of this world;" and that his disciples are not to expect the rewards of their services in this life, but in that which is to come. His own condition was in accordance with this declaration; for he said of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." When the multitude, admiring his mighty works, urged him to assume the honours of royalty, he immediately retired and concealed himself; and instead of accommodating himself to their notions of a temporal Messiah, he taught them that the Messiah promised to the fathers by the prophets was to be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The doctrines which he taught, the precepts which he inculcated, and the means which he employed, were all calculated to obstruct every prospect of a worldly nature, and to expose him to hatred and persecution. He told the Jews that they would soon cease to have an exclusive possession of the blessings of pure and undefiled religion; that their temple and polity would be abolished; that the Gentiles would be made partakers with them of the privileges peculiar to the people of God; and that men should come from "the east and the west, from the north and from the south, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Doctrine so much opposed to the fondly cherished prepossessions of the Jewish people proved the sincerity of him that delivered it, as it would not fail to place them in hostile array against him.

10. There is a striking correspondence between the character of Christ and his claims to a divine nature and mission.

He stands unrivalled and alone in the history of the world. But the importance of this view of his character requires that we should enter on its consideration at some length. We shall, therefore, direct our attention to it in the following chapter.

11. In the meantime, we may remark that nothing could be more natural for the leader of a party than to encourage among his followers a forwardness and a fervency in his cause, though it should have been at the expense of some moral duties; and were the founding of a sect his only object, he would find his advantage in fostering, by every allurements, that tendency of the human mind that makes zeal for a form or a name a substitute for holiness. I need not say how much the reverse of this was the conduct of Jesus to his disciples; and that, in place of allowing them to assume merit to themselves for their adherence to him, he frequently assured them that a profession of Christian discipleship would only be the occasion of still deeper crimination, unless accompanied with the righteousness of life and godliness which he required. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto you, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Had he been influenced by the spirit of ordinary men, and under the operation of worldly views, would he so soon have dissipated those visions of secular aggrandisement which his followers, as Jews, could not but entertain in regard to their Messiah, and have disclosed to them that scene of abasement and suffering through which he himself was to pass, and the hardships, persecutions, and death, to which they also should be appointed? "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "They will deliver you up to the council, and scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."

## CHAPTER II.

ON THE PERFECT PURITY AND DIVINE WISDOM OF CHRIST; OR, THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HIS CHARACTER AND THE EXALTED NATURE OF HIS CLAIMS.

1. IN the preceding chapter, we considered the character of Christ as it forms a contrast to weakness and imperfection; as it is opposed to every selfish principle and feeling; as it exhibits not merely perfect freedom from peevishness and impatience, but the greatest meekness and magnanimity under injury; as manifesting, in the most trying circumstances, a state of mind the opposite of despondency, and an extraordinary elevation above the world.

As the argument arising from the character of Christ, in favour of the truth and divine authority of his religion, is most powerful, and calculated to produce conviction, it is proper that it should be fully presented to the mind of the reader. I shall, with this view, briefly consider the perfect purity and divine wisdom of Jesus; the manner in which his character has been displayed; the persons by whom it has been described; and the circumstances in which they were placed.

2. With regard to the perfect purity of Christ, it is not necessary to add many observations to what was advanced in the preceding chapter. He exhibited, in a course of living action, a character of moral perfection—an absolute freedom from all that is sinful, selfish, and secular in human nature—and the possession, in the highest degree, of every virtue. His entire holiness appeared in all that he said and in all that he did, so that his enemies were unable to charge him with imprudence or blameworthiness. The judge who, contrary to his own judgment, passed sentence against him, was forced by his own convictions to vindicate his innocence, and publicly declare that he could find no fault in him. The disciple who betrayed him, who had attended him for years, who had observed him in his most secret retirement, and who had every opportunity of being thoroughly acquainted with his private conduct and views—this man, who had the disposition to inform against his Master, and who was tempted by avarice, ambition, resentment, and even a regard to his self-preservation, to make a disclosure had he been able to do so, attests before those very rulers to whom he had sold him the perfect purity of Christ's

character; and after he had made the humbling acknowledgment in their presence, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood," he went, in an agony of remorse and grief, and destroyed himself. Here was the strongest evidence borne to the innocence and to the personal excellency of Christ, by a traitor, by a man who had occupied an office in the Redeemer's family, who was daily with him in those scenes of domestic life where the real principles are unfolded, and who would gladly have recollected, had it been possible, anything to the disadvantage of Jesus, by which he might hope to ease his conscience of its intolerable burden.

3. His piety was perfect. He evinced by his whole conduct, by the readiness and perseverance with which he engaged in the most laborious and self-denying task, that he loved the Lord God with the whole heart and mind. Compare his behaviour with the commands of the first table of the law—with the supreme love to God, worship and obedience—with the humility, resignation, and submission required—and it appears fully commensurate with this high and infallible standard of Deity. In the agony of Gethsemane, when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, he reiterates the prayer, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." Notwithstanding the exquisite sensibilities of his holy nature, he murmured not at the numerous evils which he was called to endure; he was meek, gentle, and submissive; "he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." In regard to piety, he has left far behind the most devout of mankind. Removed alike from enthusiasm and superstition, he walked with God, and exemplified the nature of true and perfect religion.

4. Were we to examine the events of his life in reference to each of the duties which men owe to one another, humanity, gratitude, friendship, patriotism, charity, truth and veracity, we should find the Saviour perfect in regard to them all. We observe an undeviating respect in all that he said and did, to the reputation, happiness, and property of others. In all his intercourse with mankind he manifested a dignified simplicity, an intrepid firmness, and an unshaken fidelity. He was throughout patient and forbearing, yet never compromising principle—gentle and compassionate, yet elevated far above regard to the favour or frown of the people—humble and



unostentatious to a remarkable degree, and yet, when the interests of truth required it, he unfolded his heavenly origin, and vindicated his claims.

5. With regard to the benevolence of Christ, how fully was it shown by his ministry, miracles, sufferings, and death! He went about continually doing good; diminishing the sum of human misery, soothing the sorrows, and alleviating the sufferings of his enemies as well as his friends, and pursuing unweariedly the path of usefulness, notwithstanding the malevolence and ingratitude with which he was treated. His goodness, which was constantly operative and diffusive, conveyed temporal and spiritual blessings to the poor, the destitute, the diseased, and the miserable. The tenderness and compassion which he showed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, over whose approaching calamities he wept, must ever awaken the admiration of all who are capable of being moved by the sublimity of moral perfection. The malignity, derision, treachery, and suffering, which he encountered, could not move him away from his purpose of showing kindness and good will to mankind. The agonies of the cross did not prevent him from manifesting his divine benevolence, by the memorable prayer which he uttered, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The generous object which he prosecuted, for which he laboured and suffered, for which he lived and died, was the redemption of the human race; and for the attainment of this, he closed his career of unparalleled benevolence, by presenting himself an offering and sacrifice to God.

6. Thus we have presented to our view, in Jesus Christ, a character of unexampled and perfect purity. His life, passed not in the shade of retirement, but in daily intercourse with mankind, and in incessant and benevolent action, does not exhibit to the strictest scrutiny a single blemish. He was absolutely holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

7. Let us now direct our attention to the divine wisdom which distinguished his character, not less than his perfect purity. We must contemplate this wonderful combination before we can have an adequate conception of the character of Christ: and yet it is not necessary to enter into minute details on a subject respecting which there prevails but one opinion.

8. His transcendent wisdom appeared in all his intercourse with mankind. The incidents of his life, as recorded by the evangelists, show how constantly his path was beset with

difficulties, originating in the ignorance and prejudices of his followers; the inveterate bigotry and pride of his countrymen; and the subtle, persevering, and inhuman character of his enemies. How did Jesus conduct himself in these circumstances? Mere enthusiasm would have hurried on to irretrievable ruin, and mere worldly wisdom would have led to a similar termination; but our Lord acted throughout without the slightest embarrassment, and without a single failure. While he treated the misconceptions of his disciples with kindness and forbearance, while he exposed the insidious designs of those who attempted to entangle him in his speech, he effectually guarded himself and his actions against the misrepresentations of his enemies. So extraordinary was his wisdom in dealing with the different classes with whom he had intercourse, that, at the close of his ministry, his persecutors could not adduce an imprudent word or action as a charge against him.

9. The same transcendent wisdom appeared in all the doctrines which he taught. He gave clearer discoveries of the character, perfections, and moral government of God; the purity, and unalterable obligation of his law; the apostacy and corruption of man; his guilt and condemnation; the necessity, efficacy, and sufficiency of the atonement; and of the influences of the Holy Spirit to raise human nature from its present state of moral ruin, and to fit it for the glory and happiness of heaven. He taught that the sum of the law and the prophets, that which they were designed to enjoin and to explain, is, to love the Lord God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; that all mankind have failed, and come short of this most reasonable rule of obedience; and that as the consequence, every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. He clearly made known the only method of recovery, by asserting that he is the way, and the truth, and the life, and that no man can come to the Father but by him. When we reflect on the excellency of the doctrines which the Saviour taught—on the light which he shed on the Scriptures of the prophets—on the discoveries which he gave of God, his perfections, and his law—on the exposition given by him of the designs for which he came into the world—on the life and immortality which had been dimly disclosed, but which he so fully unfolded; we must feel satisfied of his transcendent wisdom, and that the language is not exaggerated which

describes the privilege of the people who are favoured with the gospel, as being visited with a day-spring from on high, and as walking in the light of the Lord.

10. In the exercise of his ministry, he uniformly showed extraordinary wisdom where wisdom was peculiarly required. He not only professed to teach a religion which was perfectly abstracted from all interference or connexion with ecclesiastical or civil polity—that his kingdom is not of this world; but, in conformity with this declaration, he withdrew from the first symptoms of tumult; he declined the application which was made to him to interpose his decision about a disputed inheritance; he judiciously evaded the question, whether it was lawful or not to give tribute unto Cæsar; and he replied unto those who demanded from him an explanation of the authority by which he acted, by proposing a question to them, “situated between the very difficulties into which they were insidiously endeavouring to draw him.” While he observed entire silence on topics of a political nature, and uttered not a single opinion in regard to the comparative advantages of monarchies, aristocracies, and republics, the doctrine which he taught was useful to civil government of every description, by its enforcing on the hearts and consciences of mankind the practice of the purest morality; by its inducing them to cherish dispositions favourable to public tranquillity; and by its enjoining them to pray for communities and for their rulers, “of whatever denomination they be, with a solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence which they possess upon human happiness.”

11. Even the silence which our Lord observed concerning his own claims, during the greater part of his ministry, furnishes a striking illustration of his wisdom. He acted chiefly on the principle that his character was to be ascertained by the works which he performed rather than by his professions. He repeatedly charged his disciples and others that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. When he healed the man with the withered hand, we read, that “when the Pharisees took counsel with the Herodians how they might destroy him, Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude; when they heard what great things he did, came unto him,

and he healed them all, and charged them that they should not make him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased:—He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.”\* Upon a different occasion, when unclean spirits fell down before him, and cried, saying, “Thou art the Son of God; he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.”

12. This conduct is not what we would have expected. We would have supposed that He who came into the world a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel, would have openly and constantly announced himself as the Messiah. But a very slight consideration of the designs to be accomplished by his mission will convince us, that the mode of procedure which we would have conceived the best would have been unwise and unsuited to the divine purpose.

13. (I.) It was proper that his claims should have been ascertained and decided by evidence. It was, therefore, fit that professions concerning the nature of these claims should have been sparing, until suitable evidence had been abundantly supplied. The language of prophecy, which had described the character and reign of the Messiah, produced an universal expectation both of the coming of this extraordinary Person, and that his ministry would be distinguished by divine power and numerous miracles. The ground, accordingly, on which the people justified their believing on him as the Messiah, was the miracles which he did. They said, “When the Messiah cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?” When, at the feast of the dedication, the people said unto Jesus, “How long dost thou make us doubt? If thou be the Messiah, tell us plainly: Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” When the messengers of John Baptist came unto him, and asked, “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?” we read “that in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the

\* Isa. xlii. 1—4. Matt. xii. 14—19.



dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." He confidently appealed to the mighty works which he wrought as furnishing a decided attestation of the validity of his claims. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works."

14. In connexion with the evidence afforded by miracles, the usual phraseology in which our Lord alluded to the dispensation which he introduced was calculated to lead his auditors to the conclusion that he himself was the Messiah. In conformity to the language in which the ancient prophets had spoken of the Messiah's reign, Jesus and his disciples taught the people that the kingdom of God and of heaven was come nigh unto them. The fulfilment also of numerous predictions in his life and actions clearly manifested that this was he of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus the Son of God.

15. (II.) The wisdom of God had ordained that the ministry of Christ should continue during several years, before his offering himself a sacrifice unto God. But how could this design have been accomplished, if, when he appeared in public, he had declared concerning himself that he was the Messiah? Would not the Jewish rulers have laid hold of this declaration, and have made it the ground of taking away his life? As it was, they were sufficiently disposed to arrest and terminate his course soon after he had entered upon it. From his knowledge of this hostile disposition, "Jesus walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him." While, therefore, he continued to work the most stupendous miracles, he repeatedly imposed silence regarding his claims upon those who were the subjects of his healing power.

16. If Jesus had from the beginning publicly declared himself to be the Messiah, would he not have awakened the jealousy of the Roman government? How eagerly would the Jewish rulers have availed themselves of any circumstance by which they might hope to have fixed the charge of sedition upon Jesus! "They watched him, and sent forth spies, who should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor." But by the transcendent wisdom which the Redeemer exercised, he continued during years to discharge his ministry by preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and by attesting his divine mission by the numerous and mighty works which he performed. While he

avoided the use of such expressions as the Jews could lay hold on for endangering him with Pontius Pilate, he gave unequivocal intimation as well as evidence of his being the Messiah promised to the fathers. But further,

17. (III.) It was necessary that there should not have been the shadow of a ground furnished to the Jewish rulers, or to the Roman government, for putting Jesus to death: in other words, it was proper that he should not only be holy, but that his perfect innocence should be declared to the world by the persons who condemned him. But had he announced himself publicly as the Messiah from the commencement of his ministry, such was the general expectation among the Jews, at the time of his appearing, of the arrival of the promised Deliverer, that they would probably have made use of his name in immediately revolting from the Roman yoke. On one occasion, when the people had seen the miracles that Jesus did, they said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. When, therefore, Jesus perceived that they would come to take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain, himself alone." If such was likely to be the result merely of his working of miracles, how much more probable was it that such an effect would be produced, had he openly and uniformly proclaimed himself as the King of Israel!

18. In the method which Jesus actually adopted we see the manifestation of the divine wisdom. Though to the woman of Samaria, and before the Jewish high-priest, he explicitly avowed that he was the Messiah, he in general maintained his claims to this high character by declaring that he, in a peculiar sense, was the Son of God; by showing, in the tenor and actions of his life, the fulfilment of the predictions which described the Messiah's reign—by exerting a power over the living and the dead, which none could wield except God were with him—by pouring heavenly light over the world with a fulness and an evidence that evinced its nature and origin; and by explaining, with sufficient clearness, the gracious purposes for which he came into the world, and the manner in which these purposes were to be accomplished.

19. The design which was attained by this procedure of our Lord was infinitely important. Had he at the beginning of his ministry declared himself to be the Messiah, and had he continued openly to make the same avowal, he would have

been considered by the Jewish rulers as making himself king, and, consequently, they would have been furnished with ground in his own confessions on which to accuse him to the Roman governor. We know with what readiness they would have availed themselves of a circumstance which would give their malice the semblance of zeal for the public good. But He who had voluntarily resolved to lay down his life for his people, knew well how to guard himself against the imputation of crime; and so perfectly had his wisdom contrived the means of attaining this end, that every effort of his enemies to criminate him appeared ineffectual: even Pontius Pilate, convinced of his unblameable conduct, thought it necessary to protest publicly against the death of this just man. Thus, important testimony was borne to the innocence of Jesus in that hour in which he was to suffer, the Just for the unjust: the tide of shame and sorrow, with which it was attempted to overwhelm him, rolled back with accumulating force on those who incurred the guilt of shedding his blood; and by that wonder-working providence that makes even the wrath of man subservient to its purposes, the time of his extremity was the period in which the legal authorities of his country recorded his perfect unblameableness. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

20. The manner in which our Lord discharged the duties of a public teacher showed the most perfect wisdom. Rising in dignity above the arts of human oratory, his ministrations—because they were the dictates of heavenly truth, and because they proceeded from the heartfelt concern of one who loved and pitied our race—were powerfully and persuasively eloquent. His words were spirit and life. While he taught with gentleness, meekness, and patience, it was with the boldness, integrity, and authority, becoming the Messenger of God. His manner of teaching was chiefly distinguished by an impressive authority. Whatever mode of instruction he adopted, whether it was by short and sententious maxims, or by striking similitudes and parables, he uniformly spoke in conformity with the character which he claimed. "I am come a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me; and this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth

on him, may have everlasting life." It was in perfect consistency with these declarations that he issued, in the authoritative tone of the supreme Legislator, not only the principles of the purest morality, but the doctrines of that religion which he commanded his apostles to promulgate. He spoke like one whose power extended over the laws and elements of nature; whose dominion entitled him to explain and enlarge, in his own name and by his own authority, the rules of moral obligation; whose claims to the unreserved obedience of mankind were so high and unquestionable, that no guilt was so aggravated as their disavowal or rejection; and who was fully invested, even amidst his lowliness and humiliation in this world, with the supremacy and dignity befitting its Lord. How came it to pass, that while all the teachers among the Jews placed religion in the most frivolous observations—in paying tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin—omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith—the Prophet of Galilee should have enjoined no austerities, but have inculcated purity, and righteousness, and godliness? "Place Christianity, in this respect, by the side of all institutions which have been founded in the fanaticism either of their author, or of his first followers; or, rather, compare Christianity as it came from Christ with the same religion after it fell into other hands—with the extravagant merit very soon ascribed to celibacy, solitude, voluntary poverty—with the rigour of an ascetic, and the vows of a monastic life—and let us endeavour to account for this peculiarity in the ministry of Christ, on any other supposition than that of his acting under the direction of an intelligence that could embrace higher and better views than had entered into the mind of man. "From whence had this man these things? And what wisdom is this, that is given unto him? Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses?" Born in an obscure and lowly situation, associated with illiterate fishermen as his chosen companions, how came it to pass, on any other supposition than that of his divine origin, that he uttered the most sublime lessons of moral and religious truth that were ever addressed to man? "His doctrine dropped as the rain, his speech distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; for he published the name of the Lord, he ascribed greatness unto our God."

21. The character of Christ, thus distinguished by its



moral perfection and matchless wisdom, furnishes indubitable evidence of his having been, what he declared himself to be, the Son of God. The moral greatness which he displayed was never exemplified in any other of the human race; the best of men have fallen far short of it. Why should this faultless and glorious character, remote alike from everything that preceded, and from all that followed it, have been manifested in Christ alone? What was there in the circumstances in which our Lord appeared in the world, and in the persons by whom he was surrounded, fitted to produce it? He was born and he lived in an obscure station, related to those who were in the humbler ranks of life, conversant with persons of similar condition and attainments, excluded from the schools of learning, possessing scanty means of intellectual improvement, and having before him no model, save the patriarchs and the prophets. After having passed his early years in the lowly condition in which he was born, he at once presented himself to the view of mankind, perfect in the spotless purity of his moral endowments, and in that divine wisdom which baffled his opponents, and rendered his cause triumphant against the utmost exertions of policy, power, and malignant cruelty.

22. How unlike was the character of Jesus to that of the learned men of his age and country! Proud of their privileges and distinctions as Jews, they viewed the rest of mankind with contempt. Their opinions were as remote from wisdom as their conduct was from purity; and while they indulged the bigotry and prejudice of narrow minds, he loved even his enemies, and exercised philanthropy to the whole human race. They were chargeable with hypocrisy, oppression, violence, and licentiousness: but he was without guile; he went about doing good; he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

23. How unlike, also, was the character of Jesus to that of the wisest and best men in the heathen world! Debased by the grossest ignorance and immorality as this portion of mankind was, the most distinguished philosophers rose not above the darkness and vice by which they were surrounded. They entertained the most erroneous sentiments regarding the character and moral government of the one living and true God: and with respect to human conduct and happiness, however much they differed from one another, they agreed in placing their enjoyment in the gratifications of sensuality, or avarice,

or ambition, and vain philosophy. But Jesus exhibited in his life the love and humility towards God, the purity of conduct, the spirituality of affection, and the elevation above the world, which he inculcated on his disciples. He taught the value of the soul above the body, of eternity above time; he enjoined his followers to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and diligently to cultivate all the virtues of purity, peace, beneficence, and universal good will.

24. The circumstance that our Lord stands thus alone, in the perfection of moral greatness and divine wisdom, proves him to be the Son of God. It is his heavenly origin that explains the reason why he alone should have possessed in himself all the treasures of knowledge, and every moral excellency. It is this which accounts for the fact, that he sustained a character, and uttered discourses, which the wisest and the best of men have always considered as the perfection of goodness and wisdom, and as absolutely unattainable by any other of the human race. He not only spake as never man spake, but he acted in a way different from all men. He was the sun of the moral world, before whose radiance every star disappears. He shone even amid the deep humiliation, with a lustre which bespoke his divine dignity and greatness. His character, apart from the miraculous works which he performed, bears testimony to every age that truly this man was the Son of God. It was the character of a Being who is divine and yet human, who was God manifest in the flesh, who was the Son of man, and yet perfectly free from sin. In difficult circumstances, and through a long series of actions and a course of years, he fully exemplified the whole of that law which demands perfect obedience. His life furnishes the exposition of the transcendent wisdom of his doctrines, the purity of his precepts, the spirituality, humility, meekness, gentleness, benevolence, and godliness, which his religion is designed and calculated to produce. It was, therefore, with truth that the disciples who accompanied him when on earth testified concerning him, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

25. It is not possible that a manner of teaching so infinitely superior to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or that a character so extraordinary, so godlike, so consistent, could have been invented by the fishermen of Galilee. Admit only that the books of the New Testament are authentic, and you must

allow that the authors of them drew Jesus Christ from the life. How did they draw him? Not in the language of fiction, with swollen panegyric, with a laborious effort to number his deeds, and to record all his sayings, but in the most natural, artless manner. Four of his disciples, not many years after his death, when every circumstance could easily be investigated, write a short history of his life. Without attempting to exhaust the subject, without studying to coincide with one another, without directing your attention to the shining parts of his history, or making any contrast between him and other men, they leave you, from a few facts, to gather the character of the man whom they had followed. Thus you learn his perfect innocence, not from their protestations, but from the whole complexion of his life; from the declaration of the judge who condemned him; of the centurion who attended his crucifixion; of a traitor who, having been admitted into his family, was a witness of his most retired actions; who had no tie of affection, of delicacy, or consistency, to restrain him from divulging the whole truth; who might have pleaded the secret wickedness of his Master as an apology for his own baseness; who would have been amply repaid for his information, and yet who died with these words in his mouth, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

26. "Shall we say that the history of the gospel is invented at pleasure? No; it is not thus that men invent. It would be more inconceivable that a number of men had in concert produced this book from their own imaginations, than it is that one man has furnished the subject of it. The morality of the gospel, and its general tone, were beyond the conception of Jewish authors; and the history of Jesus Christ has marks of truth so palpable, so striking, and so perfectly inimitable, that its inventor would excite our admiration more than its hero."\*

27. In concluding this brief review of the character of Christ, it ought to be remembered, 1st, That the various events and circumstances in his life are related with the utmost simplicity and artlessness. The character is not the result of an elaborate delineation, but appears from the circumstances which are stated. 2d, The character is of such a nature as shows it to have been drawn, not from imagination, but from real life. The originality and purity of the conception is far above the

\* Rouss. *Emile*, ii. 98.

reach of writers of the first eminence, and could not have been attempted by a few illiterate fishermen. *3dly*, The character of Christ is developed amid events of an unparalleled nature. The difficulty was of course proportionably increased, to preserve consistency in word and in action throughout. *4thly*, This difficulty was increased from the accordancy that must have been sustained between the character of Christ, and the divine nature of his claims and the magnitude of his office. He appeared among men asserting that he was the Son of God, and the light and Saviour of the world. But there is a perfect consistency between the claims put forth and the character which was maintained; though that character is presented to our view by several independent writers by whom it is described, not by delineation, but by a relation of circumstances, sentiments, and actions. The relation, of course, could only have been given by these different writers in consequence of their having witnessed *in reality* what they narrate.

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### CHAPTER III.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLES—THE GRANDEUR OF THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM—ITS ACCORDANCE WITH REASON.

1. THERE can be no doubt that, in regard to moral and religious teachers, mankind are disposed to attach great importance to their piety, integrity, and disinterestedness, and to consider them as tests of the degree of credit which is due to the tenets they promulgate. There is in the fervour of pure and genuine devotion an emotion and an energy that are calculated to lull to rest the most wakeful and inveterate prejudices. There is an unfeigned earnestness in the manner of those who inculcate doctrines which they themselves believe to be of great avail to the happiness of mankind. We should expect that this earnestness would accompany the ministrations of teachers sent from God—that the proofs of their superiority to worldly motives would be numerous and unambiguous—and that the pure and heavenly tendency of the religion which they were appointed to propagate would be impressively exemplified in their own character. Might we not suppose that the very language of the ambassadors of heaven would have a peculiar fitness to speak to the heart, and that the tenderness of God over his erring creatures would breathe in the words which announced the fulness of his mercy?



2. Earnestness and solemnity of manner are pre-eminently characteristic of the writers of the New Testament. Those qualities were possessed by Christ in their highest degree, blended with a gentleness and tenderness which were often called into exercise. The apostles and first teachers of Christianity had a large portion of the same spirit; but that it was acquired from the religion they promulgated, we learn from the very different feelings and sentiments which they showed before and after the day of Pentecost. Previous to that period, they were influenced by the bigotry, worldly-mindedness, and exclusive spirit of their nation; they could even request their Lord to command fire to come down from heaven for the destruction of those who had offended them; they timidly deny and forsake him whom they believed to be their Messiah, when they became apprehensive of personal danger. How different were their views and mode of acting after the period to which I have referred! They were fearless and unmoved in the presence of kings, bold in defending the cause which was everywhere spoken against; while they united to this intrepidity a tenderness of affection so deep, and lasting, and disinterested, that, regardless of the narrow limits of Jewish prejudices, they entered on the field of the world, and with no earthly reward but persecution and death, laboured to convey the gospel to men of all nations. It was only persons who felt the reality of the sublime facts which they record, and who had thoroughly imbibed the spirit of a religion which knows no distinction between the tribes and nations of mankind, who could thus exhibit on all occasions the overflowings of a godlike kindness, and devote themselves to the promotion of the happiness, spiritual and eternal, of the human race. Had they entered on their career merely to support a fabrication, and acted afterwards from regard to consistency, from what source would they have derived a devotedness and generosity of feeling, neither momentary, nor feigned, nor ordinary, which surmounted every barrier in the way of winning souls to Christ, and which was so often dissolved in tears over a world that doomed them to distresses and death? Resist the impression as we may, such conduct is in accordance with the claims of men who say they are the servants of the Most High God, who are commissioned to show unto mankind the way of salvation. In the apostle Paul, in particular, we have a happy example of this deep-toned feeling and earnestness in the Christian cause.

When he embarked in this cause, he sacrificed at the shrine of the cross every prospect of worldly aggrandisement, reputation, ease, and life, and consecrated all his talents to the glory of Christ. For this one object he suffered the loss of all things, pursuing it even while every human probability was against its ultimate success, zealously promoting it amid the persecutions of the uncivilized, and the dangers of the heathen world, and not holding his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. There was no cold speculation in his religion—it was all conviction and earnestness; and the same spirit of deep solemnity and sincerity is in exercise, whether persuading the unbeliever of the truth of Christianity, or communicating its instructions and consolations to those who were already established in its belief. As an example of this, I shall quote a few verses from his address to the weeping Church of Ephesus:—"Behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that those hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that as labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."\*

3. No one can believe that the men who felt and acted thus were either enthusiasts or deceivers. But if their spirit and conduct are utterly irreconcilable with such a supposition, so is the system of religious truth which they taught. The grandeur, the spirituality, and the consistency of that system,

\* Acts xx. 25—33.

are far beyond the reach of man's invention, and bear internal evidence of their divine origin. It is only necessary to read the Bible with a serious spirit in order to perceive this evidence, and to feel its force. The agents employed, the events which are accomplished, and the designs to be attained, are all seen to be on a scale of greatness combined with simplicity, suited to the direct interposition of that God who is excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working.

4. It approves itself to the understanding or reason of men. "There is that universal harmony, consent, and concurrence in the drift," as President Edwards remarks; "such an universal appearance of a wonderful and glorious design—such stamps everywhere of exalted wisdom, majesty, and holiness, (in matter, manner, contexture, and aim,) that the evidence is the same, that the Scriptures are the word and work of a divine mind—to one that is thoroughly acquainted with them—as that the words and actions of an understanding man are from a rational mind. An infant, when it first comes into the world, sees persons act, and hears their voice, before it has so much comprehension as to see something of their consistence, harmony, and concurrence. It makes no distinction between their bodies, and other things; their motions and sounds, and the motions and sounds of inanimate things. But as its comprehension increases, the understanding and design begin to appear. So it is with men that are as little acquainted with the Scriptures, as infants with the actions of human bodies. They cannot see evidence of a divine mind, as the original of it, because they have not comprehension enough to apprehend the harmony, wisdom, and perfect consistency, of Divine Revelation."\* All must admit that there is a strong presumption in favour of the inspiration and divine authority of a book so pure and spiritual in its tendency—which contains a code of laws, and a treasury of principles, so comprehensive, that they not only embrace every elevated suggestion of the human mind in all ages, but embody doctrines that afford the most powerful sanctions to morality—doctrines which reason could never discover, but of which, now that they are discovered, it must highly approve. This system must commend itself to the understanding of man; *First*, because it accords with every reasonable anticipation of the human mind; *Secondly*, on account of the purity and originality of its moral precepts; and *Thirdly*, on

\* Miscellaneous Observations.

account not merely of its superiority to every other religion, but its exclusive claim to be regarded as a divine revelation.

5. It accords with every reasonable anticipation of the human mind. It is the dictate of enlightened reason that God is the common Parent of the whole human race. Accordingly, the only true God, as revealed in the Christian system, is not a local Deity, like the gods of the nations, but the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things that are therein—the God of all mankind. Of this great truth the Greeks and Romans, and the nations of antiquity, were entirely ignorant. The announcement by Christians of this fundamental doctrine—which forms the basis of all true religion—was one main cause of the persecution which they experienced from the Roman government. Another dictate of the human understanding is, that all mankind are equal in the sight of God. This the Christian system assumes, and its announcement was new to the world. The rights of man, as a rational and immortal being, apart from his condition as a member of the body politic, were altogether foreign to the notions of the Romans and the nations of antiquity. They, accordingly, never recognised a human being in a slave, who was treated by them much in the same way as the lower animals. But Christianity declared that all men, whatever may be the disparity of their external circumstances, are equal in the sight of God; that they bear alike on their common nature the image of the Creator, and have the same natural rights, the same immortal destination, and are accountable to the same Supreme moral government. It regards all men, in all circumstances, as partakers of the same common nature—as involved in the same moral ruin—subjected to similar wants, fears, and distresses—and requiring the same gracious aids and influences. It offers a great salvation to man without regard to his external circumstances; it proclaims glad tidings of great joy to every creature; it addresses its gracious invitations to every member of the human family, without respect to worldly distinctions—commands them all to repent, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a doctrine entirely new to the nations of antiquity, who viewed religion solely as a matter of state, and who never had been accustomed to distinguish man from the citizen, or the rights which belong to him as a human being, from those which he might claim as a member of the body politic. Hence the opposition of the Roman government to the early Christians, who promulgated



tenets so much at variance with the principles of the Roman polity; and which, if permitted to prevail, could not fail to produce a complete revolution in the laws and religion of the empire.

6. The understanding of man, when calmly listened to, suggests, that as he is formed for an endless existence, the concerns of eternity must infinitely surpass in interest and importance the things of time. The religion, therefore, that comes from God, will deal with men as immortal beings—as sinful, but moral and accountable creatures, whose eternal happiness is to be provided for—and who ought to prosecute with earnestness and diligence the means prescribed by divine wisdom for attaining immortal felicity. It will not represent wealth, or pleasure, or prosperity, as constituting the chief good of man, or as the thing which should be mainly sought after; but it will adopt its precepts and its promises, its hopes and its consolations to man, as rapidly advancing from this fleeting scene to an endless state of existence.

Christianity, and Christianity alone, accords with this reasonable anticipation of the human understanding. It represents this world as comparatively insignificant—possessing importance only as the birth-place of immortal beings, and as the theatre on which they are to be trained for a higher state of existence. It commands men to labour, not so much for the bread that perisheth, as for that which endureth unto life everlasting—to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness—to have their hearts and their treasures in heaven, where alone true and permanent blessedness can be enjoyed—and to pass through this transitory scene, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, looking not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and which are eternal. It admonishes us of the danger of having our hearts so engaged with things of momentary duration as to neglect the great and immortal interests of our being; and appeals to our consciences in language of peculiar significancy,—“What shall it profit a man, though he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”\*

7. Again, it is a dictate of enlightened reason, not only that God is in himself pure, but that his favour, and the happiness flowing from it, are only to be enjoyed by those who bear some

\* Matt. xvi. 26.

resemblance to him in purity. We cannot conceive it possible that he should admit persons into a state of consummate felicity whose hearts are alienated from himself, and who are destitute of that holiness in which he delights. Whatever revelation, therefore, which he may give of his will, must represent sin as the greatest evil, and incompatible, in its reigning power and pollution, with admission into that state of blessedness into which a taint of moral defilement cannot enter. Christianity gives this representation of the incompatibility of sin with future happiness. It declares that all those who continue in its practice shall not inherit the kingdom of God. It assures us that the design for which the Saviour came into the world was, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Were all men to yield themselves to the renovating and purifying influences of Christianity—were all men consistent Christians—all would be piety, purity, humility, integrity, and love. The earth would be full of happiness. But surely a system of religion, the universal prevalence of which would produce universal peace and happiness—and which, in the estimation of reason, is fitted to prepare for immortal felicity—has descended from the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. Thus, all the reasonable anticipations of man regarding the nature of a revelation which comes from God are found to be realised in the Bible.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

1. It is unnecessary to expatiate here on the purity and fulness of the Christian morality. Its original character has a more direct bearing on our present design; and we shall briefly allude to some of the points in which this originality appears. These mainly consist in the virtues which it inculcates, the rule which it prescribes, and the great motives which it enforces, and declares to be necessary to true morality.

2. The virtues inculcated—benevolence, humility, and a patient endurance of injuries and sufferings—are far different from the ardent love of form, the jealousy of reputation, and the quick sensibility to resentment, which have been usually

lauded by mankind, but which have been prejudicial to human happiness. If the virtues first mentioned were universal, it is evident that the world would be peaceful and happy; if the latter dispositions were universal, the world would be full of contention and violence. How came it to pass that Jesus should have inculcated virtues so different from those qualities which were praised and admired by the world, and so different also from the dispositions which were held in esteem by the Jews when he appeared? Benevolence, humility, and patience under injuries, were, it is true, enjoined in the Scriptures of the Old Testament; but Christ not only exemplified them in his own conduct, but, in direct opposition to all worldly prospects, he frequently reminded his disciples of the obligation of practising them. In regard to benevolence, I need only quote the well-known words, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."\* The virtue of passive courage, or patience under injuries, is thus forcibly enjoined: "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."† As to humility, the whole tendency of Christianity is to recommend it. Our Lord, on various occasions, taught his disciples the necessity of it. When they asked, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he "called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."‡ On another occasion he said, "They (the Scribes and Pharisees) love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren: he that is greatest among you shall be your servant; and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." ||

\* Matt. v. 44.

† Matt. v. 40.

‡ Matt. xviii. 1—5.

|| Matt. xxiii. 6.

3. The rule of moral conduct, prescribed in the Bible, is the will of God. His will, wherever expressed, is the law according to which moral agents are to regulate their thoughts, words, and actions. This law extends to the regulation of the powers and affections of the heart, as well as to the external action; and, therefore, those who own Christ as their Master and Lord, feel that in all circumstances, private as well as public, they are under its authority. The advantages which result from the recognition of the will of God as the rule of morality are: first, the exclusion of all false principles, such as expediency, and honour, and custom—principles which are recognised by the world, but which are varying as the fashion of the times; secondly, superiority of moral conduct, required in Christians; and, thirdly, in place of a shifting morality, changing with the age or country in which we live, we have a rule of moral obligation that is at all times immutable—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. This circumstance alone gives to the Christian morality the character of divinity.

4. But the great motives which Christianity enforces, and declares to be essential to true morality, are also peculiar and original. The principle from which an action is performed, is, according to Scripture, of as great importance as the rule or law by which its performance is regulated. The chief motive which the gospel inculcates, is the love of God and the Saviour; and it cannot be denied that this principle, including as it does the affections of reverence, esteem, and gratitude, is a most efficient incentive to the practice of duty. It was this principle, living and vigorous as it was, that produced those numerous and exalted virtues, which adorned the lives of the early disciples of the Christian faith, and from which even the unbeliever has not been able to withhold his praise and admiration; it has been this principle that has animated the members of Christ's body down through successive generations, to our own day, and from which has proceeded that spirit of philanthropy that has already produced so great a change in the physical and moral condition of mankind.

5. The earnestness with which the sacred writers entreat men to live to the glory of God, must strike every one who reads the Scriptures. All are there commanded to live to him who died for them, and to do all for the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ. No action that partakes of the nature of morality, whether it relates to



the inward disposition, or to the outward conduct, is placed beyond the scope and control of this command ; and therefore no action that is not performed for the honour of God and the Lord Jesus Christ is, according to the Scripture standard, acceptable obedience. In the Bible, God is all and in all : but in the world—in its history, and discoveries, its arts and sciences—man is everything. Every one who will make the comparison, must be struck with this contrast. It was when superstition on the one hand, and pride on the other, were predominant over the earth—when men were living, and were disposed to live, without God, in the world—that Christ appeared ; who in order to teach man, by his own example, the lowly position which belongs to him, and that to God alone the glory is due, acted throughout his course with the most perfect humility. This example of humility in regard to man, and zeal for God, is imitated by the apostles, who, in place of giving way to the self-complacency and pride not unnatural to persons who were the founders of a new religion, uniformly teach that Jews and Gentiles are alike sinners before God—that it was by the grace of God that they and others were made to differ—that it was not on account of any works of righteousness which they had done, but by the mercy of God, they were saved ; and that, after enduring stripes, and bonds, and imprisonments, in the service of their Master, they had no reward to expect but what is wholly of grace. In what lowly terms do they speak of themselves and of their fellow disciples ! “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”\*

6. The most marked characteristic of the whole of divine revelation is its attributing everything to God, and rendering everything subservient to his glory. Throughout its history, amid the numerous events recorded, from the creation of the world down to the close of the canon of Scripture, throughout its sublime scheme of prophecy which extends to the consummation of all things—throughout its doctrinal system, which was gradually unfolded, till it received its completion by the

\* 1 Cor. i. 25 to the end.

ministry of Christ and his apostles—God is continually brought to the notice of the reader, and proclamation is ever made, “I am Jehovah—my glory will I not give to another.” Those events which in other writings are ascribed to the prudence, or the courage, or the ingenuity of man, are here attributed to God. It is he alone who gives counsel and wisdom, who marshals the host for the battle, who fills his enemies with terror, who brings the people into subjection, who makes them willing in the day of his power, who inspires with zeal and fortitude men who were before dispirited to engage in the work of converting the world unto Christ, and who thus puts the gospel treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power, may manifestly appear to be of God, and not of men. In the Bible, and there alone, God is seen to dwell with men on earth, for the purpose of winning them back from their ungodliness, by teaching them that he alone is their chief good, and that they have been formed to find their happiness in him, and to promote his glory. “God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

7. How has it happened that the writers of the Bible alone should have uniformly presented this exalted standard of morals? How has it happened that the only motives from which virtue, in their estimation, can proceed, and which in the judgment of reason are transcendantly pure, should have been presented by them alone? If the design of the book is so manifestly the same as that which God had in the creation of man—namely, the glorification of himself, by the voluntary agency of man—ought we not to admit that this is a strong presumption in favour of the truth of the claims of the writers as divinely inspired teachers? It is only on this supposition that we can account for the fact, that they were not like other men in their views of God or in their representations of man—and therefore they have taught that the only legitimate principle of every action of a moral nature is one which, though all may feel it difficult to practise, is in itself holy and just, and good. It is thus we are enabled to account for the amazing fact, that the writers of the different books of Scripture, who lived at different periods, were so entirely forgetful of their own merits, and so disposed to disclaim the merits of others, while they were so concerned for the honour and glory of God. They have placed man, not in the position which vanity would assign to him, but in that which the Creator has

allotted to him; and they teach him the obligation of living to God, and for God—of glorifying him with the spirit and the body, which are his.

8. I must add to these observations, that the code of Christian morality is adapted to, and designed for, the world. It is like the religion of which it forms a part; intended, not for the inhabitants of particular localities, or accommodated to the narrow attachments of national prejudice, but for all mankind in every age and country. Its tendency is, by the spirit of enlarged benevolence, which it teaches its disciples to cherish, to unite in the bonds of affection the whole family of man. Unlike to Mahomedanism—the precepts of which are adapted to local habits, and fitted to a mere section of the human race—the precepts of Christianity are suited to every climate, and to every people on the face of the earth. The views which the Bible gives of the divine nature, and of the gracious interposition of Heaven on behalf of fallen humanity, produce, in all who sincerely entertain them, a disposition to unlimited philanthropy. That gospel which is to be addressed to every creature—which is designed for all classes, and for all kindreds alike, requires all who embrace it to do good to all men as they have opportunity; and thus it powerfully tends to diffuse, not the exclusive spirit of sect, but the kindness and good-will which contemplate the happiness of the world.

9. Finally, the exclusion of all false principles is a striking peculiarity of the Christian religion and code of morals. In the whole system there cannot be shown one doubtful, far less, erroneous principle.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE MORAL SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND ITS EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS TO BE REGARDED AS A DIVINE REVELATION.

1. IN showing the great superiority of the Christian religion to every other, certain writers have instituted a comparison between it and paganism, Mahomedanism, or corrupted Judaism. But where is the resemblance between the things which are thus compared? What is there in the numerous absurd superstitions that have been classed under the denomination of paganism that can deserve, in the estimation of any reflecting man, to be compared with divine revelation? Or what is there in Mahomedanism—a system that has been promulgated,

not by a person acting merely as a religious teacher, but as a military adventurer—a system that pretends to give the sanction of divine authority to cruelty, vengeance, persecution, and sensuality—that can bear a comparison with the pure religion of the meek and lowly Jesus?

2. The moral superiority of this religion to every other system of whatever nature that has ever appeared in the world, is perfectly obvious. To the natural and moral attributes of God, as represented in Scripture, and the perfect consistency of character which is there ascribed to him, I have already alluded. I have also adverted to the morality of the gospel—to its original character, and its adaptation to the whole family of man. The direct tendency of the whole system of divine truth—of its doctrines and precepts, its forms of worship, and its institutions, its consolations under trial, and its hopes of future glory—is to produce in man the moral image of his Maker. The particular mode in which this tendency operates—in which this moral effect is produced—is deserving of special attention, as it shows us that the Bible, and it alone, makes man like the God that made him.

3. The Bible takes for granted throughout that the happiness of our rational nature is only to be attained in union with moral excellence; and that moral excellence consists in the conformity of the character of man to the character of God.

4. Few will deny the first of these propositions: its truth may be established by evidence altogether apart from divine revelation. That man may have some gratification without or against the approbation of his conscience, while his heart is alienated from God and opposed to his authority, will not be disputed. While his mind is in this state of opposition to God, and not caring either about the knowledge or the doing of his will, he may derive a portion of enjoyment from those inferior springs which, in the present state, the goodness of the Creator has commanded to flow. We may not perhaps be capable of fully comprehending why an intelligent and moral agent, in this state of indifference to the character and government of Almighty God, should be allowed to have access to sources of pleasure; but this much we clearly understand—that the existence of such an order of things is illustrative of the patience and forbearance of God, and seems necessary to a state of trial and moral discipline. For were not some sense of gratification connected with evil, there would of course be no temptation to



its commission, and consequently no probation of the moral principles of man as an accountable being.

5. Still, as a state of trial and moral discipline must necessarily be limited as to duration, and (as we believe) terminates at death, the enjoyments to which we allude are restricted to this period. A chief design of Christianity is to give certain information of the realities of a subsequent state of being, and to place within the reach of mankind the means and the inducements to acquire the character that will make them meet for its enjoyment. In some instances this information is rejected, and as much as possible forgotten, because it is perceived that its reception would lead to a course of action totally opposed to the indulgence of favourite views and inclinations. But in many cases it produces such an impression on the heart and conscience as awakens, as if from a dream, the man who had lived without God. He sees the glorious excellency of God's real character; the perfect purity of a Supreme moral government, whose acts he has hitherto unheeded; and the unalterable obligation of a law which, though holy, just, and good, he has disobeyed. He observes a painful dissimilarity between himself and the moral likeness of God thus presented to his view; his reason assures him that this must be the character of a Being infinitely perfect; and yet he feels himself unmeet for dwelling either on earth or in heaven, in the communion of the God from whose presence he cannot flee. With an anxiety to which he had been till now a stranger—and which, perhaps, there is nothing in his external circumstances more likely than before to produce, he asks—what he must do to be saved?

6. There is a moral certainty that the man who forgets God here will be confronted with the holy character of God hereafter; and that the misery produced by a perception of total dissimilarity will be most agonizing. He may possess, during the period of momentary duration, the esteem of his fellow-creatures, and very amiable and useful personal qualities; but it is obvious that, as the character which he has formed is of a different and opposite description to that of God, there is an end of this happiness when he enters on an eternity where the brightness of God's presence is seen without an interposing veil, and is felt as ever present; where he is constantly met by an administration of government which he hates, as contrary to his wishes and inclinations. To have existence

lengthened out for ever in such circumstances is an evil of fearful magnitude. It is a punishment which in the ordinary course of things, and without any direct or positive infliction on the part of God, follows from the habits which are formed through the neglect of duty and violation of Supreme authority.

7. All who admit the truth of these remarks—and it seems scarcely possible that this should be denied—will acknowledge the desirableness of obtaining definite views of the character of God, and of the nature of his moral government. The hints that are given us concerning these in the works of creation and providence, are highly valuable; but though they had been more numerous and clear than they really are, they are acquired in a form too abstract to have much influence on the mind. It is the professed object of Christianity to make God known to mankind, and to produce in them such conformity to his character as is essential to true and immortal happiness: it reveals God that he may be loved; and without resembling him, and loving him, there can be no delight experienced in his holy presence. “This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” “In all other religions, the good of the present life was the first object; in the Christian, it is but the second: in those, men were incited to promote that good by the hopes of a future reward; in this, the practice of virtue is enjoined in order to qualify them for that reward.” In other words, much of the happiness which is to form this reward is to arise from the possession of holy character—a character which in moral excellence bears a resemblance to that of God. The design of the gospel is to conduct us through a state of dangers and sufferings, of sin and temptation, in such a manner as to form the principles and dispositions requisite to qualify us for the enjoyment of happiness hereafter.

8. This noble design human reason pronounces to be most worthy of divine wisdom. This scheme contains evidence within itself of its heavenly origin. Even though it had not been attested by miracles, every person who would give it the attention requisite to understand it, would acknowledge that it is most suited to the nature and circumstances of men, and becoming the character and government of God—that it bears the impress of divinity. The design of impressing upon man the moral likeness of his Maker, and of thus rendering him capable of enjoying immortal felicity and glory, is as beau-

tifully simple as it is great and godlike, and harmonizes with all that Nature makes known to us of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

9. The means revealed in the gospel for accomplishing this design are indicative of divine wisdom. While they are above Nature, they are perfectly accordant with the laws of our moral constitution; they are such means as a complete knowledge of the human heart would suggest; and consequently their Author must be that God to whom our frame is known. They are as worthy of the Majesty of heaven as they are adapted to the nature of man; and fitted, by operating on the principles of his nature, to renovate and exalt his character.

10. It is this circumstance chiefly which renders revealed religion a reasonable religion. Its facts and representations—or, in other words, its doctrines—are so many excitements to the performance of its precepts. The former so completely harmonize with the latter, that they both lead in the same direction, and induce to the same course of action. This perfect unity of all its parts distinguishes Christianity from the various false religions which mankind have framed to themselves. In them all, though they may include some excellent precepts, the doctrines have no more connexion with these precepts, as leading to the same moral end, than they have with the history of philosophy. But the divine Author of the Bible addresses himself throughout to the common principles and feelings of human nature; and while he authoritatively enjoins the duties which he would have us to perform, he enforces them by modes of persuasion the most likely to influence the heart, and to secure compliance.

11. To all who have had much dealing with their fellow-creatures, the fact is familiar that mankind are little affected by mere abstract truths of any kind, whether in religion or in morals. It has often been the complaint of moralists, that the most beautiful speculations, and the most powerful reasoning, should have so slender an effect in meliorating the heart and life. A parent, therefore, as if instinctively acquainted with this fact, while he points out the path of duty to his child, endeavours to interest his affections by such historical narrations and appropriate examples as are likely to do so. The most successful teacher is he who knows what modes of persuasion he should adopt in order to excite the emulation, and secure the cordial obedience, of his pupils. How are we

to deal with the man—with any hope of his reformation—whose heart and conscience, through long-continued indulgence in sin, have become callous? We must fix on some remaining principle or affection of his nature, and through the medium of this attempt to awaken the mind to a sense of shame and sorrow; so that he may feel the evil of sin, and be led to exercise repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

12. It is thus that the Bible has been framed with a perfect knowledge of the whole mechanism of human nature, and an acquaintance with the channel through which persuasion and instruction may be most effectually communicated. The means employed for reclaiming a sinful race from their wanderings, and for restoring them to holiness in order to qualify them for happiness, are such as give a just representation of the character of God, and make a most powerful appeal to the feelings of the human heart. No one can duly reflect upon them without being forced to pronounce them to be in full consistency with all that can be known of the laws of God's moral government, and the faculties and affections of the mind of man. Abstract principles stand forth embodied in living action, in a form which develops the divine character, which illustrates the extent of the divine law, and which is calculated to produce that conformity to the will of God, the necessity of which it demonstrates. We may say, without presumption, that if God had purposed to use means for regaining the love and the confidence of his disobedient children, and of thus rescuing them from final perdition, means could not have been exhibited more likely to attain these great ends than those which the gospel brings into operation.

13. In extending pardoning and redeeming mercy to mankind, it is clear that, to the accomplishment of so glorious a design, it was necessary that a correct representation should be given of the character of God, and that the boon should be communicated in a way calculated to ensure the grateful esteem and the willing obedience of sinful men. Unless it had been accompanied with a just representation of the character of God, its value would not be appreciated, and the nature of his government would be liable to be misunderstood; and unless it were given in a way fitted to affect the heart, and to attain the holiness of men, what would be its utility? Had it been the design of God merely to confer forgiveness on the human race, without any ulterior effect upon the renovation



and purification of their character, the announcement of pardon might have been reserved till the judgment of the great day. But forgiveness in such circumstances, even had its bestowment with such limitations been possible, would have been of little avail. In order permanently to benefit man, it was necessary that such revelation should have been given of the character of God as would be calculated deeply to humble the sinner before him, to awaken in his heart the desire of reconciliation, and produce in him hatred of sin and love of holiness.

14. The eternal King has exhibited his mercy and his justice, in his procedure towards his offending creatures, in a way which shows alike his abhorrence of sin and his compassion to the sinner. While under the malediction of his law, and liable to its fearful penalty, he formed a plan for rescuing sinful men from guilt and from corruption; and at the same time vindicating, by unequivocal means, the purity of his character and government. He has presented himself to our view as the just God and the Saviour. He appointed the Son of his love, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, to bear our punishment. He spared him not, but gave him up to the death for us all. This divine person voluntarily submitted to unexampled sufferings, underwent the deepest humiliation, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. While his cross, therefore, shows the inseparable connexion between sin and misery, it proclaims the greatest love, it unveils the divine perfections, and it allures a wayward and rebellious race to the love of that God who has thus demonstrated that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner.

15. Forgiveness of sin is here connected with a sacrifice of infinite value—a sacrifice which represents the character of God as boundless in mercy and inflexible in justice, and which from its nature is fitted deeply to affect the human heart. We see here a belief in its reality becomes a channel through which a principle of renovation and vitality is introduced into the soul; and how faith in this remedy is necessary to its operating on the mind, so as to relieve it from the inveterate malady of sin. The glorious discovery which God has made of himself can be of no avail to the purification of the heart of the man who discredits it. Its light and power are excluded by his unbelief; and a remedy which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

works its cure through the powers and principles inherent in human nature, is personally inefficacious so long as it has no access to these powers and principles. Hence, God is said to have so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever *believeth* on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

16. The hindrance of unbelief being removed, the admirable adaptation of the means exhibited in the gospel to the complete recovery of man to the image of God is obvious. How can he entertain a doubt or suspicion in regard to God's gracious designs, after the manner in which his solicitude for human redemption has been attested? The gift of transcendent worth furnishes demonstrative evidence of the love of God, and of his willingness to receive into favour his offending children. If when they were enemies he proved his desire of reconciliation by setting forth his own Son as a propitiation, where is the ground for hesitation in respect to his kind reception of all who have recourse to his mercy? If he has commanded his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, can there be any question that he will freely pardon all who turn to him through this great sacrifice? Here God appears just while justifying the guilty who believe in Jesus; and we may feel assured, therefore, that in coming to his throne we shall find acceptance.

17. The first principle which it is necessary to introduce into the human heart is the love of God, which consists of esteem of his real character, and delight and complacency in it. The introduction of this affection, as an abiding principle of action, is essential to the renovation of the nature of men, and to the formation of that holy character, the possession of which, in a perfect measure, is eternal life. What method can be conceived more likely to awaken this affection than the manifestation of God exercising the fulness of his mercy in accordancy with his infinite purity, and displaying the greatness of his mercy by means so peculiar and costly as far to outstrip every earthly comparison? We are not left to suppose that the pardon bestowed is of little consideration and of easy attainment, because of the boundless power and sovereignty of the Donor: for it cannot reach us till God's own Son is sacrificed for us; and it is thus associated in our minds with the sufferings and death of one whose worth far transcends all created existence. The cross of Christ loudly announces not merely that God is love;

but that in his solicitude for the redemption of sinful beings, and in order to secure its attainment, he has not spared the highest gift which heaven could impart. This, indeed, is love that passeth knowledge. Is it not adapted to make an appeal, the most tender and powerful, to the feelings and to the understanding of man? Corrupted as his heart may be, and insensible to his true and immortal good, he is here addressed by his Maker in language to which if he only attends he cannot but comprehend, and through a channel which is accessible to the inmost recesses of his mind. If he admire the goodness of God exhibited in the works of his hand, can he withhold his gratitude and admiration when he beholds this goodness carried as it were, to the farthest limit, by the manifestation of God in the flesh, that he might rescue sinners from the calamitous consequences of guilt, and from evils equally great which are inseparably connected with a depraved nature? Will not this discovery of the love of the great and omnipotent God towards me—one of a whole order of beings who had revolted from him—lead me to a cordial compliance with his long-resisted claim to the love and confidence of my heart?

18. But the operation of love to God in the heart of a sinful being implies hatred of sin, and sorrow on account of it. The representation of God's character pourtrayed in the dispensation of redeeming mercy—as holy and just, as well as good—is fitted to produce genuine contrition. In every case in which it does not soften the heart, it is because it is not seen aright. The gospel announcement does, indeed, presuppose our guilt and condemnation; and its very introduction is a vindication of the authority of God's law in its requirements, and in its penalty; but then its glorious purity is presented to our view, blended with mercy, and in harmony with the love of that gracious Father, who, notwithstanding the many wrongs we have done, thinks of us only with infinite kindness and compassion. We have exposed ourselves to the most fearful calamity; but he has made provision for warding it away for ever from us by sending down the Son of his love to bear our deserts in his own body on the tree. The evil of sin is thus exhibited to us in the death of our Benefactor; and we are taught to conceive what must have been our sufferings had not He interposed between us and merited wrath. The recollection of his Father's character, while it inspires the prodigal with hope, deepens his abhorrence of himself, and his sorrow for his guilt. He resolves

to confess the unworthiness which he deploras, and to cast himself on the goodness of an injured but forgiving parent. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants."

19. The construction of the gospel is most calculated to increase this repentance, and this deep humility. For it not merely affirms that every mouth must be stopped, and that the whole world must become guilty before God ; it not only exhibits the condemnation of all mankind in the sufferings and death which were inflicted on their Representative ; but while it shows the guilt, it sets forth the refuge provided in the sacrifice of the Son of God. The cross, which is the symbol of our redemption, proclaims, by the poverty and abasement of our great Surety, that we for whom he died are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. We may have disliked sin before on account of its disagreeable personal consequences ; but now we are taught to hate it because of its intrinsic vileness, as offensive to God, and directly opposed to his glorious character and government. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

20. The love of our fellow-creatures is inseparably conjoined to the love of God, and is a duty to which we are exhorted by the same high authority. The introduction of this principle into the human mind, and its maintenance in active operation, are essential to the purification of the nature of man. But where can we learn so effectually the duty of exercising this affection as at the cross of Christ ? He has given us an example, in his life and in his death, of disinterested benevolence ; and he commands his disciples to love all men, not excepting even those who hate them, who despitefully use them, and persecute them. In acting improperly towards them, we are guilty of ingratitude and disobedience to Him who died for them as well as for us. If we love Him, we shall also love them ; and feel the soundness of the obligation of doing them good as we have opportunity. While looking to the blood which Christ shed to atone for our trespasses, can we feel inclined to cherish a resentful or malignant disposition ? Shall we not be led rather to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and



anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice; and to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us? If God so loved us when we were dependent and ungrateful enemies—if Christ so loved us when we were insensible of our danger, and set in opposition to the generous Benefactor who came for our rescue—how can we ever treat any of our fellow-creatures as enemies, or regard them with any other feelings than those of benevolence?

21. Nor is the cross of Christ less influential in eradicating the passions to which multitudes are the miserable captives. When we look abroad on the world, we observe its inhabitants active and enterprising; but how many of them are walking in a vain show, and are disquieting themselves in vain! Is it not the world—in its business, or its friendships, or its amusements, or its honours, or its riches—which interests and fills their hearts, to the neglect and the dishonour of him who has given them being, and who crowns them with his goodness? If these idols could have been chased away from the heart by authoritative command, it is long since the separation had been universally accomplished. But experience proves that other means must be employed for the attainment of this desirable end. The affections must be interested and engaged with other and with higher objects, before they will part with such as are earthly and sensual. This is effected by the manifestation of God; not in the abstract form of natural religion, but in the likeness of sinful flesh, dwelling with men, weeping over their sorrows, enduring their miseries, reclaiming them from their wanderings, pointing out to them the road to heaven, and dying for them on a cross. He has shown the insignificancy of the world by passing by its kingdoms and its glory; and by the indifference he discovered to its smiles and its frowns, to its good and its evil. He has opened up to the view of his followers a kingdom whose glories are eternal, and an inheritance, in comparison of the greatness and excellency of which all earthly things are shadowy and vain. The believer is weaned from those idols, and delivered from the thralldom in which their votaries are held, through the cross of his Lord, by whom the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

22. Finally, it is by the representation that God has given of himself and of us, in the Gospel, that we are enabled to account for, and effectually to improve, the circumstances in which we are placed in the present state. Apart from the Bible, what is the world? Its history is inexplicable, and its inhabitants seem to be wandering in an endless labyrinth. But the Scriptures unfold the mystery by presenting to our view the God of love and of holiness, as directing all events; as interposing to prevent the moral ruin of which his creatures have been the authors; as working in them a complete renovation; and as forming their character by a course of varied dispensations, as well as by divine influences, for the enjoyment of the happiness which he intends for them. He awakens them to reflection, and to a sense of the uncertain and unsatisfactory things of time, by pain, privation, disappointment, and death; and he maintains in exercise, by means of trials and afflictions, the principles and habits from which happiness is to flow. This system is corrective and instructive, and proceeds from the same wisdom and love which have laid a stable foundation for our hopes, and withheld not the gift of transcendent value. The dispensations of Providence are designed for the same glorious end as the economy of redeeming mercy. They form the means by which the Christian character is purified, and by which the Christian graces are strengthened and matured for the regions of immortal felicity and glory. The man of sorrows led the way, as a pattern to all his followers, in this course of affliction; he was fitted and accomplished for his high pre-eminence by suffering; and it is appointed for them also, through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God.

23. They are thus assured that the circumstances in which they are placed are ordered by their heavenly Father, and overruled for their advantage; that all things are made to work together for good to them that love God, and who are the called according to his purpose. The same Redeemer that sends the trial, to accomplish the purpose of his love, sympathises with the sufferer under it, and soothes the sorrows which it occasions. The character of submission to God, and of conformity to his will, formed in this school, is productive of happiness in any situation; it is the beginning of that eternal life which consists in bearing the image of God, and in dwelling in his holy presence; and in every case in which it is attained, there is the conviction of experience, that though no

chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, it afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby.

24. Thus have we satisfactory evidence, that conformity in man to the character of God is necessary to true and eternal happiness; that the Gospel alone furnishes the means fitted for the production of this character; and that the circumstances in which we are placed in this world are the most suitable for the principles of Christianity to take effect on human nature. It thus appears "that the heart of man, the Bible, and the course of Providence, have a mutual adaptation to each other," and that they all proceed from the same divine origin.

25. This conviction will be strengthened the more we view, in connexion, the order and events of Providence, and the representations, the threatenings, and promises of the Bible. From our personal experience of their entire harmony, we shall have growing evidence of their coming from the same divine wisdom, and of their being designed to co-operate to the production of the same great ends. If Scripture informs us that the way of holy obedience to the will of God is the way of comfort and of safety, however numerous may be the temptations to deviate from it, does not our own experience and observation certify the same truth? If the Word declares that the happiness of man is secured—not by giving to the creature the affection and the confidence which are due to God, but by choosing God for his portion, and acquiring the principles and habits that will lead to a cordial compliance with his will—have not the providences of every age confirmed the declaration? If the Bible affirms that the connexion between sin and misery is inseparable, do we not learn, from observation, that mankind are corrected by their own wickedness, and reprov'd by their backslidings? If the gospel promises that no one shall ultimately be a loser by any sacrifices of earthly good which he may be required to make in his adherence to Christ; and that no man who hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for the Redeemer's sake, but shall receive an hundred fold in this time, and in the world to come eternal life—the recorded testimony of those who have been in the circumstances to which this declaration applies is, that though they seemed to be sorrowful, they were always rejoicing; that though in appearance they had nothing, yet they possessed all things. The gospel assures

us of peace and tranquillity, when in sincerity we commit ourselves and our concerns to the Lord; and have not they who have made the experiment found, that in such circumstances he has taken them under his peculiar charge, and has conducted them completely through difficulties and trials? Thus, by the light of the gospel, God is seen in the darkest providences, as well as in the brightest—as the wise and sovereign Disposer of all events, who is now leading his people through a wilderness into a land of everlasting rest and joy, in which they shall learn that the system of providence and grace is one great whole, designed by the God of love; and shall be able to attest, from their experience, “That there has not failed any good thing which the Lord had spoken.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE FOR THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF REVELATION.

THIS species of evidence is distinguished from other branches of the internal evidence by this—that it has a joint reference to the record and to man. It requires the individual to look inwardly upon himself, as well as outwardly upon the contents of the Bible; and, from careful examinations and comparisons, to deduce the conclusion.

1. Though fully aware that men are liable to deceive, and to be deceived, we are obliged to trust to their testimony, when we have ascertained it to be trustworthy, and to act on the supposition of its truth in the momentous concerns of life. The testimony of two or three credible witnesses is considered as sufficient to prove any matter of fact. But if we act, and are obliged to act, upon the testimony of others in the affairs of this visible world, with which we are supposed to be well acquainted, how much more requisite is it to do so in regard to the world to come, which is hid from mortal eye? If we give credit to the testimony of man, how much better reason have we to receive the testimony of God? To him all things are naked and open; he sees the end from the beginning—the circumstances which are to characterise the history of our race, during every period of the future, are as well known to him as



are the events of the present hour; and who can neither deceive or be deceived. Every communication which he is pleased to make to us of his will, and concerning our duty, must be truth, and nothing but the truth. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness (testimony) of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." \*

2. We understand the apostle as affirming, by these words, that every genuine believer in Christ has in himself satisfactory evidence of the reality of what is testified in the gospel. This differs from the external evidences of Christianity, and also from the numerous proofs of divine authority which the contents of the record so amply and indelibly bear. The evidences arising from these various sources are things without the mind, and which remain the same independently of the belief or unbelief of men. They are monuments of the truth of divine revelation which exist as truly when, through wickedness and folly, they are not perceived, as when their heavenly origin is seen and felt. But the evidence which the believer has in himself of the reality of what the gospel testifies has no existence apart from that faith of which it is the effect. In order to possess the experimental proof of the truth of Christianity, it is necessary that it should be cordially received, that its offers of grace, and promises of salvation, should be put to the test, and that we should fully yield our hearts to the influence of its holy principles. The other evidences may be understood, and their force may be felt, without any change of mind, and without any personal application to the fountain of mercy; but this, like the white stone with a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it, is restricted to him that believeth, and furnishes him, through the medium of his own experience, with powerful and satisfactory proofs that Christianity is in all respects what it professes to be. We are not capable of estimating its amount or its value, till we have felt the mighty efficacy of the gospel enlightening our minds, renovating and purifying our hearts, and producing in us peace, joy, and righteousness. Accordingly, Christianity itself affirms, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto

\* 1 John v. 9, 10.

him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

3. And yet the experimental evidence, in some of its aspects at least, may be made intelligible to others. Thus, we could not help regarding a person as possessed of divine knowledge, who could tell us the inmost thoughts of our hearts, and who showed that he was as intimately acquainted with our hidden feelings and desires as we are ourselves. The Author of the Bible does this. But in order to be convinced that he does so, we must compare what the Bible says respecting human nature, and consequently respecting our nature, with what we are, and what we are conscious of. We may, therefore, consider, first, the accordancy between what the Bible affirms we are, and what, from experience and consciousness, we know we are; secondly, the adaptation of Christianity to our wants, or the correspondence between what Christianity offers and what we feel we need; and, thirdly, our conviction of the truth of Christianity from our personal experience of its mighty efficacy, or the accordancy between its description of the saving effects which it produces on the heart, and what we have actually experienced.

4. With regard to the first of these particulars, namely, the accordancy between what the Bible affirms we are, and what we know we are, it may be illustrated by the conduct of our Lord to the woman of Samaria. In his interview with that person, he told her so many things in her life, that showed he was acquainted with her history, and as well convinced her that his knowledge was supernatural. In like manner, Scripture gives a view of human nature so perfectly accurate, that man has only to look within, and to compare what is felt, and what has been experienced, with what is written, to perceive the exact accordancy. The most remarkable of its representations is its uniform account of the great depravation of the human family, and of every member of it. It is of the whole human race it is affirmed, that there is none righteous; that they are without God; that they desire not their happiness in his favour and presence; and that they live without him in the world. The principle of ungodliness is in each and all alike. They differ, indeed, widely as to the degrees of their corruption otherwise. Some pass through life with decency, and even respectability of moral deportment; while others employ their talents and opportunities in acts degrading to them-

selves and injurious to society. Some there are who possess so much native generosity, kindness, and sweetness of disposition, that they appear, like the young man whom Jesus loved, truly amiable. They exercise humanity, benevolence, and uprightness, so invariably, without religious principle, that their character is known and distinguished for humanity, benevolence, and uprightness; while there are others who seem void of these pleasing and useful qualities, and who are under the dominion of selfish and malevolent views and feelings. The shades of moral difference are almost infinite among mankind, arising from education, constitutional temperament, and from diversified opportunities and advantages.

5. But the charge which Scripture brings against mankind is, not that they have lost all those feelings of kindness to each other, and of moral susceptibility, without which society could not exist, but that they are alienated from God, in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways; that they seek their enjoyments in forgetting the God that made them, and that the love of other things has so complete an ascendancy over them as to exclude from their bosom the love of him that made and that sustains them. It is no refutation of this charge to allege that there are many whose hearts glow with the warmth of benevolent feelings; whose exemplary conduct, and bountiful supplies to the poor, render them blessings to their neighbourhood; whose honourable feelings furnish a guarantee against everything unworthy or disreputable; whose elevated sentiments and pursuits raise them far above the mass of human beings around them; and whose love of virtue, in the common acceptation of that term, is shocked with the slightest failure in any of the proprieties or decencies of life. All this is fully admitted; but in place of furnishing an answer to the universality of the charge which the writers of the Bible, in the name of God, with an unbroken uniformity, bring against the human family, the supposed exceptions only form aggravations. For is it not an aggravation of the guilt of man, that while his heart is accessible to considerations of gratitude, duty, and interest, and is susceptible of the most generous kindness, and the most devoted attachment, it is void of the love of God; that he whose understanding raises him so highly in the scale of being—who can reason so accurately, and form plans for his future welfare—forgets God his Maker, and acts the part of a fool in regard to his great and eternal concerns; that he who

can discourse with truth and eloquence of God—his being, perfections, and moral government—remains all the while in apostacy from him, and in rebellion against him; that he who has so strong a sense of right and wrong as to perceive the reasonableness of giving to all their due, and who can plead for the injured rights of his fellow-creatures, can wilfully disregard the claims of God, his first and his best benefactor; that he who fears his fellow-creatures, does not give heed to his Creator; that he who is grateful to an earthly benefactor, never turns in thankfulness to the heavenly One; that he who shrinks from bodily pain, thinks not of irretrievable ruin; that he who attaches boundless importance to time, trifles with eternity?

6. The charge which God brings against man is, that he lives in a state of alienation from him; that he has nourished and brought up children, and that they have rebelled against him. “A son honoureth his Father, and a servant his master: if, then, I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of Hosts!” And to render it impossible for any member of the family of man to escape from the charge, it is declared that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; that there is none righteous, no not one; and that the natural mind is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The obvious meaning and interpretation of this declaration is, that he neither seeks after God, nor esteems and loves him as his chief good; that he is so far from feeling delight in drawing near to him, that he habitually and willingly forgets him; that in his pursuits there is no serious intention to honour and glorify him who is infinitely excellent and lovely, and from whom, and to whom, and through whom, are all things; that he really trusts not in his power and goodness; that he repairs not to his all-sufficiency; that he lives not in subjection to his authority; that he aims not at his glory, and that his soul is estranged from him. This is indeed a charge of a very serious nature, which implies that man is depraved to a very affecting degree. But who is there who turns his attention on himself—who looks into the inner man, who examines his own heart and character—who does not perceive its truth? What has been the experience of the best men in all ages on this subject? Their confessions, in as far as they are known to us, have all been in accordance with



the statements of Scripture; and if persons so far advanced in the virtues of personal religion have felt the corruption of their nature so deeply, may we not conclude that the rest of the human race are subject to the same corruption, and would have as readily owned it, had they compared the habitual state of their minds, in regard to God, with what the Bible affirms concerning it? The accordancy is so perfect, that no one can seriously make the comparison without being fully convinced of it. He feels that the Author of the Scriptures is far better acquainted with the workings of his mind than he is himself; that he describes the character of his desires and aversions with perfect accuracy; and that he can be none else than the searcher of the hearts and the trier of the reins of the children of men.

7. Secondly, let us consider the adaptation of Christianity to our wants, or the accordancy between what Christianity offers, and what we feel we need. When we observe certain means adopted to accomplish certain ends, we infer the existence of design. When we observe in the gospel certain provisions, all in harmony with the character and moral government of God, and which meet the necessities of man, we conclude that this is the effect of forethought and design. It is the argument thence arising for the truth of Christianity that has satisfied the majority of Christians in all ages. To them the convincing proofs of the divine authority of our religion, derived from miracles and from prophecy, are not so accessible; but they have only to follow out some of the fundamental principles of their nature, in order to conduct that process of reasoning by which they infer, that from the adequacy of the blessings which Christianity offers to supply the wants which they feel, its author must be He who is infinite in knowledge and whose compassions are everlasting. They have a heart-felt sense of the spiritual wants of their nature, and they are therefore capable of estimating the value of the admirable adaptations of the gospel. The peculiar and experimental evidence by which they are satisfied of its divine authority, grows in strength and in comprehensiveness with their years; it has the advantage of presenting itself in a varied and still more commanding aspect, as their experience of its renovating and sanctifying power is enlarged; and without seeming, in some instances, to be aware of it, they are in the possession of an argument, the most convincing and philosophical, for

believing and obeying the Gospel. Though they may not be able to meet the sophistical reasonings of the enemies of the cross, their faith is not on that account the less founded on evidence, though from its nature it is different from that which is adapted for reaching conviction to the hearts of those who are insensible of their wants. They have the witness in themselves; they have that species of proof, than which there is none more powerful or satisfactory, which is the result of a personal experience of the blessings which the Saviour bestows. They possess, in the holy and heavenly affections which his doctrines communicate, a pledge of the purity and beneficence of their Author; they know, for they feel, the mighty virtue of his sacrifice in removing the guilt of the conscience, and in filling them with peace and joy.

8. When the believer finds, from growing experience, that the gospel remedy possesses all the virtues which his spiritual maladies require—that it is more than commensurate with the extent of his necessities; that, through it, pardon is communicated for the removal of his guilt, and purifying influences to cleanse him from defilement; strength for his weakness, and knowledge for his ignorance; consolations suited to every affliction, and a sure and certain hope of never-ending happiness—is it without evidence that he concludes it to be a revelation from the God of the spirits of all flesh? The character and government of God are here presented to his view, in an aspect so pure, and yet so merciful, as to awe while it wins the heart; the tenderness of his compassion is brought near to him through an atonement which, while it illustrates his justice, assures him of his love; such gracious aids are imparted as prepares him for the various duties and trials of life, and yet so as not to preclude the necessity of personal exertion and watchfulness; and his yoke, withal, is felt to be so gentle and easily borne, as to render a willing submission to its requirements not less conducive to his present happiness than to his final safety. Others may speculate concerning the numerous external proofs of divine origin by which the Bible is supported; but while he feels that its doctrines have a renovating, purifying, and consoling power—that there is no evil which they do not alleviate, and no real good which they prevent him from enjoying—has he not the best grounds for regarding Christianity as “the wisdom of God?”

9. This accordancy, it is true, between the adaptations of

the Bible and the wants of fallen humanity, may only be perceived as a general truth, and exists as mere intellectual speculation, in the minds of certain readers of the Scriptures. They have no heartfelt sense of the spiritual wants of human nature in their own case; they have no such view of the holiness and perfection of the eternal God, and of the consequences which are likely to ensue from the relation in which, as sinners, they sustain to the supreme Governor and Judge, as is afforded when the light of heaven strikes upon the conscience. But when this light does shine upon the mind, and awakens, as from a dream, the man who had lived without God, his eyes are opened to perceive the real character of God, as well as his own; to see that Great Being in whom he lives, and moves, confronting him in the just authority of that government whose acts he has hitherto unheeded, and in the spirituality of that law, which, though holy, just, and good, he has violated. The light which thus breaks in upon his mind dissolves the charm by which he had been knit to the world: and, as if all that had given it interest and fascinating power were annihilated, he feels the nothingness of all the pleasures, and honours, and treasures of a momentary duration. To which of the springs of inferior enjoyment can he go to procure the oblivious draught that will remove from his memory what it is misery not to forget, and to save him from the fearful looking for of judgment which it is still greater misery to anticipate? Has he not yet around him all sources of happiness with which, till now, he has been satisfied; all the objects of affection that had called into exercise his benevolent and social feelings; all the fair reputation which he has acquired; all the pleasures arising from amusements, and from social intercourse; and all the enjoyment which the varying combinations of taste and fancy can communicate? He has them all; and yet he is unhappy—unhappy, because he sees nothing in himself corresponding to the moral likeness of God—nothing that can be pleasing to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity—nothing to render him meet for dwelling, either on earth or in heaven, in the immediate presence and fellowship of that God from whose presence he cannot flee. He feels the bitterness of a wounded spirit, which the efforts of human skill cannot remove; and with an anxiety to which he has been till now a stranger, he asks what he must do to be saved?

10. Under this deep impression he is directed to the Bible,

of the contents of which, if he knows them at all, his knowledge hitherto has been merely speculative. But he now feels the accordancy between what Christianity offers, and what he needs—an adaptation so perfect, that it must have been designed by that “God who is rich in mercy” to meet his individual case. The divine plan is unfolded to his view, which places the character of God in a new light—a light calculated deeply to affect the heart; and which, while it vindicates his holiness and justice, gives the most touching discoveries of his loving-kindness. By this means the friendship and fellowship with God, which our first parents enjoyed, are restored to him who repents and believes the gospel. By this means he is restored to true happiness, by being restored to him who is its fountain; and by the conviction, deep and abiding, of the emptiness and vanity of every portion of which God does not form the chief part. He is thus introduced by the gospel into a new world, into regions of unconfined beauty and loveliness, where the sunshine is scarcely ever darkened, and where the fruits convey life and immortality. He is brought into contact with objects which lead him to form a just estimate of the real importance of time, and of the far greater importance of eternity; and to value all good, not according to its appearance, but to its properties and duration. He learns from the cross of Christ wherein his happiness consists—that which meets all his wants, which relieves his fears, which raises his hopes, which gives him peace in believing that God is reconciled to him, and that this God is his God for ever and ever. He has now a taste for nobler food than that with which he was wont to content himself—a taste that is gratified, and that can only be gratified, by the provision of the gospel.

11. Has he not, therefore, satisfactory evidence of the fact, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, even though he may be ignorant of the proofs afforded by the number and magnitude of those signs and wonders with which it was first ushered into the world? Has he not reasons for his faith, of which the highest created intelligences would approve as founded not on fancy and feelings, but on truth; though his situation in life may have denied him the opportunity of weighing the evidences arising from miracles and prophecy? He knows that the way in which the remission of sins is extended to the penitent and believing, according to the gospel, is from God, because it is worthy of the highest conceptions



which can be formed of the rectitude of his character and government; because it does not exalt one attribute of his nature by annulling the claims of another; because its benefits are so free that they may be enjoyed by all but those who wilfully reject them; because it gives a righteousness commensurate with the loftiest requirements of the divine authority, and which establishes over the mind a peace that, under every evil, keeps the heart and the mind by Christ Jesus; and because it is so pure in its tendency that it constrains, by the most powerful and affecting motives, to deny all ungodliness, and worldly desires, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. He has found that other refuges are delusive and false; that a rigid observance of all the rites which superstition suggests serves no other end than to remind him of their utter inefficacy to relieve his conscience and sustain his weakness; that the merit of his own obedience cannot remove the penalty due to his past transgressions, far less constitute him righteous before God; and that, after having long and laboriously walked in the light of his own fire, and in the sparks which he had kindled, he reaped no other fruit than disappointment and sorrow. But in Christ and in his cross he has discovered a secure and lasting resting-place—a ground of acceptance with God so firm and stable, that it proves itself to be the contrivance of unerring wisdom, by enduring every test, and by appearing, after every new examination, still more worthy of his confidence.

12. The accordancy between what the gospel gives, and what man requires, is further evident from the abundant provision which it makes for his weaknesses. It effectually provides for the removal of his helplessness for duty, as the believer ascertains from his own experience. If we compare this transformation to life from the dead, it is as if every member of the body from which the spirit had fled were suddenly restored to health and vigour, and were fitted for performing, with the fresh activity of renovated beings, the functions peculiar to each. If we compare it to liberty from bondage, it is as if the captive were freed from his chains and his prison-house, and were allowed to return to the home and the country from which he had been withheld. If we compare it to a transition from darkness to light, it is as if, at the midnight hour, the sun poured his light over the world, and enabled the man who had long been secluded from his cheering

rays to behold the scenes of beauty and loveliness which rose to his enraptured view. Thus, life and strength are imparted to him who has become "a new creature in Christ Jesus;" and as he advances on his journey, he becomes better acquainted with the never-failing efficacy of the resources to which he always has access. The grace of the Redeemer is sufficient for him, and his strength is made perfect in his weakness. He also administers consolation to his disciples, under the different and successive afflictions which they may be called to endure. The promises of the gospel, so numerous and various, assume the fact, that they are subject to suffering in many different forms, and that, therefore, in order to meet every varying aspect of their distress, it must impart the comforts that are appropriate to the actual circumstances of each individual, and to the requirements of every separate case. Are they in poverty?—they are commanded to trust in God, who directs and controls all things, and who does not withhold any real good from those who love him. Are they called to mourn over the death of their nearest friends?—the loss only urges them to value more highly the communion of the all-sufficient and ever-living Friend, whose presence will never forsake them, and by whose counsel and care they are conducted to that resting-place from sorrow and separation where the souls of the just assemble out of every people, and kindred, and tongue. Amid all the diversified circumstances of their journey through life, the gospel supplies them with consolations adequate to their support; and, with the experience of such abundant consolations, have they not good ground for believing that the doctrine of Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God? When to the support which it imparts to its disciples *now*, we add the view which it gives of the dignity to which our nature is to be raised, and of the glory and felicity which it is to enjoy—in comparison with which all the happiness of this world is but the pleasure of childhood, and all the splendours of time but the first blushes of an early dawn—we have thus a prospect which stretches far beyond things visible, to a future and enduring existence—which communicates to the nature of man all the grandeur connected with immortality. Can the religion which makes man the heir of an unspeakable weight of glory, and which prepares him for its full fruition, by placing him, even in this sublunary state, in immediate contact with all that is great, and holy, and pure, proceed from

any other source than the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift?

13. We now consider, thirdly, the conviction which we acquire of the truth of Christianity from our personal experience of its mighty efficacy; or, the accordancy between its description of the saving effects which it produces on the heart, and what we have actually experienced. This experimental proof of the truth of Christianity consists “not in a coincidence between the statements of the book, and the state of our own moral economy, nor in a coincidence between the provision which it offers, and the felt necessities of our actual condition; but in a coincidence between what to us is a most interesting prophecy or promise, and the living fulfilment of it in our own persons—a proof most effective, individually, to ourselves; and which, multiplied as it is in the frequent and unceasing repetitions of it throughout all the countries of Christendom, might furnish an enlightened observer with the very strongest materials for the demonstration of the reality of our faith.”\* What is the testimony of an aged Christian who, during many years, has felt the power of the gospel—and whose varying circumstances have led him to view it under varying aspects—but the result of his experience of the truth of Christianity? Though such a testimony, from an aged Christian, may have little weight with the unbeliever, it is justly considered as a species of evidence derived from experiment; and possesses, accordingly, in the estimation of the individual himself, as well as in the judgment of those who are like minded, all the authority which is due to an argument deduced from so sure and philosophical a source. The infidel may attempt to impair its force by ascribing the growing convictions of the disciples of Christianity—arising from the peace, and joy, and purity, experienced in its faith and practice—to the visionary workings of the human mind; he may disown the validity of that evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, which results from its felt and transforming efficacy on the inner man, to which he is in himself so entirely a stranger; but to the real disciple, whose heart has been led captive to the obedience of Christ—who was led to see in the gospel, in the outset of his course, a refuge from guilt, and anxiety, and fear—who has possessed, since he began to live by the faith of the Son of God, happiness more elevated and more rational

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than he could have known had he continued beyond the reach of its transforming power—who has had varied and ample experience of its efficacy, to sustain him under all afflictions—and who has found it so mighty in subduing corruption, and in fulfilling in him all the gracious ends which it is its avowed object to attain. To the Christian who has felt all this, and who has felt it during many years, there cannot be any evidence in support of Christianity to which he will revert with higher satisfaction than that which is furnished by his own daily experience. This kind of evidence has the advantage of being not only familiar to every true believer in Christianity, but of growing in strength with his years; the number of facts on which it rests increases as he advances in an experience of the power of religion; and in that last and solemn hour of his pilgrimage, when his faith stands most in need of support, he is confirmed in his belief that a religion which has shed upon his mind so many pure and consolatory influences, cannot disappoint the hopes of eternal enjoyment which itself has inspired. If it has fulfilled, in his experience, all that it has promised to perform in time, has he not good reason for believing that it will accomplish, with equal certainty, all that it has promised in relation to eternity? Why should a system which I have found to be all truth on this side of the grave be supposed to be false the moment I pass beyond it? Has it so far triumphed over the corruption of my nature as to produce in me, by its regenerating power, an abiding principle of love to God and to man—as to awaken within me fervent aspirations after that state of cloudless perfection and happiness which its own inspired language could alone describe; and am I, notwithstanding, to imagine that the pure and peaceful state of mind which it has thus created, is to be referred to delusion rather than to the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift?

14. There is all the difference between the case of such a person and his who is still without experience of the mighty change which the gospel describes by being “born again”—being “created anew in Christ Jesus,” as it regards their capabilities of forming an accurate judgment of the blessings of the gospel, that there exists between him whose knowledge is mere theoretical speculation, and his whose knowledge is the result of a personal and continuous observation. The one may have been charmed and won by the beauty of that external evidence



which has authenticated all God's communications to man ; but the other has put these communications to the test of experiment, by yielding himself so entirely to their influence, that he may be said to have felt and handled them. The one has contented himself with admiring the firmness and proportions of the outward structure, while the other has entered into the sanctuary, has examined the design and use of its various parts, and has seen the glory of the Lord so manifestly shining around him, as to leave no doubt on his mind that the sacred edifice is none other than the house of God, and is the gate of heaven. The affections of a new nature, which are to expand in regions of undecaying loveliness, have been awakened in his heart ; and in the strength of his faith, and the assurance of his hope, he can constantly oppose to the frown of infidelity, and the charge of fanaticism, the testimony of an enlightened conscience, and the no less valuable testimony of his own experience.

15. The conflicts of the spiritual warfare, as described in the written Word, are felt by the experienced Christian. He is recovered, by the unseen arm that ever accompanies the gospel, from secret as well as from open backslidings ; and every time he is restored from the verge of error and temptation, from a lukewarm and backsliding condition, he has new and endearing proofs of the prospective provision which the Author of Christianity has made for the necessities of his followers ; he is constrained by his ever-recurring necessities to have recourse to the patience and intercession of his great High Priest ; and thus, from his requiring to have much forgiven him, he is capable, from his personal feeling, to bear testimony to the fact, that mercy reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Christ Jesus. Had he been less impressed with a sense of his need of the Saviour's compassion, he would not have had such rich and varied experience of the effectual operation of those treasures of grace and offices of power and mercy with which Christ is invested for the benefit of his people ; he might not feel so deeply the mighty debt which he owes to him who has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood.

16. His faith is also strengthened by his experience of the rational enjoyment that accompanies the belief and practice of the gospel. I call this enjoyment rational, because its sources are such as reason must approve of, and therefore the charge of fanaticism is totally inapplicable. The infidel may treat

with contemptuous scorn the tranquillity which Christianity sheds on its disciple's heart; but could he communicate this feeling to his own dark and joyless mind; could he without prejudice see the religion of the cross wipe away the tears from the eyes of the penitent mourner, and raise him above the dominion of guilt and fear to the region of its own peaceful influences; could he behold the obscure and lonely cottage brightened by the rays of that sun which pours his softest beams on the habitations of the righteous, and which awakens their inmates to the melody of their Creator's praise; could he cardidly view this happiness in others, or experience it himself, would not his reason induce him to ascribe the religion which produced it to its heavenly origin? Is it possible for the believer to reflect on the truth of his religion, as verified in his own experience; to reflect on its efficacy in sustaining him under the varied forms of affliction with which he may have been visited; to remember the tranquillity which its precious promises inspired, even when his heart was burdened with sorrow; to survey the spots of living green which it has created amid the barrenness of memory's waste; without feeling his heart glow with admiration of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord? These recollections, without any of the pain, have all the effect on the heart which is felt in the remembrance of distant and departed joys; they operate upon the mind, in rendering the gospel still more dear to it, as the presence of an early and valued friend, who has passed along with us through the sufferings of life, by recalling to our mind all that we have endured and enjoyed together, re-animates our slumbering affections towards him, and makes us more clearly mark how closely he is associated with all that we love. It is thus that the Christian, in the decline of years, views in his religion all the kindness and the worth of an old and tried companion and friend; feels greater confidence in its power and efficacy, from the peace and good hope, which in every evil as well as in every gladsome hour of his pilgrimage, they have inspired; and from the firm conviction, arising from long experience, he can meet and refute the cavils of the enemies of his faith, by maintaining, that he knows the grace, compassion, and faithfulness of him in whom he has believed, and his persuasion, founded on this knowledge, "that he is able to keep that which has been committed to him against that day."

17. Hence the self-evidencing power of the Bible. It has in itself an evidence of its truth, which commends it to the consciences of men. Some, it is true, do not admit, or do not perceive, this evidence; but the evidence is there, notwithstanding. They have eyes, but they see not, in consequence of their not allowing themselves to be put in a position of seeing the light. The Scriptures have inherent in themselves such signatures of divine wisdom and power, as convey to the consciences of men infallible certainty of their truth, and as leave those who reject them without excuse. Indeed, none ever truly receive the gospel until they receive it on account of its own glorious and self-manifesting excellency. It is only in such cases that the light of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, shines into the heart. The Scripture bears testimony to itself, and in itself, that it is the word of God; so that wherever the Bible goes, and by whatever means it may be conveyed, it has in itself the witness of God its author, assuring men, by the glorious light and power which are in it, and which accompany it, that it has come from God. If such evidence accompanied the voice of God as gave assurance to the penmen of Scripture that it was his, his Word written by them is accompanied with its own inherent evidence, and gives assurance unto all men that it is from him. He began the writing of this Word himself with his own finger, and he appointed the writing of the remainder; and thus he has conveyed the whole of his mind and counsel to us in a book, to give every succeeding generation security against its contamination by the errors and traditions of man. This book, or rather the Word in the book, may be clearly discerned to be God's—as clearly as the works of Nature appear to be his by the indubitable indications of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power which they afford. We must believe this, if we believe that the Bible is from God; for in that book we have the following declaration:—"How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? that are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"\*

\* Jer. xxiii.

18. The only use, therefore, of the external evidences, is to bring men to that word of God which they directly authenticate. Those who proceed no further than the intellectual exercise which the study of the evidences furnish, derive no spiritual benefit from the divine revelation, of which they are the accompaniment and the attestation. Happy are they into whose hearts the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, shines; and who, from the evidence of its divine authority, inherent in itself, receive the Word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of the living God!

Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,  
Pillow and bobbins all her little store;  
Content, though mean; and cheerful, if not gay;  
Shuffling her threads about the live-long day,  
Just earns a scanty pittance; and at night  
Lies down secure, her heart-and pocket light:  
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—  
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;  
And in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,  
Her title to a treasure in the skies.

19. The experimental evidence for the truth of Christianity is common to all believers. There are many Christians who have neither leisure nor opportunity for studying the other evidences of divine revelation; but all—whatever may be the variety of their natural powers, or the difference as to mental culture and education—all have in themselves the witness that their faith does not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. They all have experience of the power of the gospel in the change which it produces when it creates anew in Christ Jesus—in the peace which it communicates, in the heavenly hopes and enjoyments to which it raises, and in the principles and character which it forms. They know—in a peculiar sense of that term—the grace, compassion, and faithfulness, of him in whom they have believed; they have in themselves the evidences of his power and love; and they are firmly persuaded, therefore, that he will not suffer them to perish, but will keep them unto life everlasting. Other evidences arise from circumstances which are without the mind; but this is written on the heart, indelibly impressed by the finger of God. Men of powerful understandings, who can fully perceive and appreciate the force of other evidences of divine revelation, may be incapable of seeing this, in consequence of their having no personal experience of the power of religion on their hearts, and no acquaintance with the operations of that living faith which unites to the Redeemer.



20. It is perhaps unnecessary to say, after the explanations that have been given, that there is nothing akin to enthusiastic impression in the experimental evidence. On the other hand, it is accordant with sound and enlightened reason. Does it not accord with reason to infer, that when a being who is naturally ignorant, sinful, and guilty—who is prone to seek enjoyment, not in God, but in the creature, and in gratifying the desires of the flesh and of the mind—is made alive unto God, is spiritually enlightened, denies himself to all ungodliness and unrighteousness, and practises all that is pure, and lovely—does it not accord with reason to infer that the power which produced this mighty change is God's? If we have experienced this great change, and the effects which arise out of it—if that gospel from which others derive no spiritual benefit has come to us with its self-evidencing light and power—have we not evidence, of the highest and the most incontrovertible kind, of the incomparable excellency and the divine origin of Christianity?

21. This evidence is that by which the unlettered Christian can successfully baffle learned sophistry, and withstand profane ridicule. Unlike the evidence of the Christian faith, which is treasured up in the memory, and which may be partially forgotten in the hour of need, this is inscribed on his heart, and supplies him with the means by which he can repel all the fiery darts of the wicked. As the man born blind confounded his adversaries by alluding to the facts of which he had personal experience, and by tracing these to the direct operation of a divine hand, so the genuine Christian can refer to what he himself has felt, and tasted and handled, of the word of life, and can refute impious theory by practical knowledge. He can thus give a reply to the Jew who requires a sign, and to the Greek who seeks after wisdom; for he can tell both of the miracle of grace which he has experienced in himself, and of the divine wisdom which has been taught him by the Holy Spirit. He is thus ready always to give an answer, to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear. It is thus that the advanced believer, full of grace, and ripe for glory—with the world receding from his view, and heaven opening to his faith—can say, as the result of evidence, clear, growing, and conclusive: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for I have felt it to be the power of God unto my salvation."

22. I have only further to add, that the causes which are productive of the evidence of experience in favour of Christianity are to continue in operation till the end of the world. The miraculous powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit are no longer enjoyed by the church. Their withdrawment was announced when they were fully possessed. Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. But God continues from age to age to attest the truth of the gospel, by accompanying it with divine power for converting sinners, for purifying the nature of man, and for conveying to the heart the peace, and joy, and hope, which he alone can bestow.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ACCORDANCY OF SCRIPTURE WITH THE MORAL CONSTITUTION AND PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF MAN.

1. WE might expect to find, in a revelation from God, an entire accordancy between its statements and the moral constitution and the present condition of man. We might confidently presume that such revelation would have no tendency to subvert any fundamental law of moral belief, nor give such communications respecting the invisible world as would be incompatible with the actual circumstances of the human race. We might feel assured that we should find it to be neither too simple, nor too learned; that its agreement with the truth of Nature would be so perfect as to stand the severest test of critical examination; and that the further men advanced in knowledge and in morals, the stronger would the evidence of its excellence and divine authority appear.

2. How far such anticipations are realized in regard to the Bible, will appear from the observations which I am now about to make. But presuming that they are fully met by the sacred Scriptures, I may remark, that no inconsiderable evidence is hence afforded of their divine authority. For some of the subjects which are there presented to our view are the most profound—too profound for the perfect comprehension of the human mind, and the most likely to have betrayed uneducated men, such as the writers of the Scriptures generally were, into fatal inconsistencies, had they not been under infallible guidance. The questions concerning the ground of moral obligation, and its immutability; the freedom of the will, and divine

prescience; the inhabitants of the invisible world, and the mode of their existence; the state of departed spirits, and the rewards and punishments of a future life; are topics to the full understanding of which men of the most enlarged and cultivated minds have proved to be incompetent. In their descriptions of these subjects, the first philosophers of antiquity have written things puerile and absurd. In place of expecting greater wisdom from the sacred penmen in reference to such themes, we have no right to expect so much, on the supposition that they wrote not under supernatural guidance. But their striking superiority to all other writers is most obvious, and is not denied. This superiority is most manifest even in regard to books written by their own countrymen, as well as those which have been composed by others. When we compare them with the apocryphal writings, or with the Alcoran, we are satisfied, from internal evidence, independently of external testimony, that they cannot be referred to the same origin. Why should this be, if the Scriptures are—like those works with which we compare them—mere human productions?

We shall illustrate our meaning more fully, by noticing the statements of Scripture in regard to the following particulars:—

3. (I.) The foundation of morals, and the immutability of moral obligation. The opinions entertained upon these topics by the profoundest philosophers have been very different. Some have maintained that virtue is created solely by compliance with positive enactments, and that moral obligation does not exist independently of the commands of superior power. It is clear that the subject is of great importance, inasmuch as every system which calls in question the immutability of moral distinctions has a tendency to undermine the foundations of all the virtues, both private and public, and to dry up the best and purest sources of human happiness.\* How have the sacred writers treated this subject, on which men of the most powerful intellect have uttered opinions injurious to the interests of morals? Have they made virtue consist in a regular observance of rites and ceremonies, to the neglect of purity of heart and righteousness of life? Have they, in a single instance, admitted that moral obligation is merely local and temporary, and is altogether produced by the command or appointment of superior power?

\* Stewart's Philosophy.

4. On the contrary, all their statements proceed on the principle that the foundation of moral obligation is immutable and eternal. They represent God as essentially and unchangeably pure and righteous; and as loving truth and holiness from the absolute perfection of his nature, and hating iniquity. They suppose that man, anterior to his possessing a divine revelation, is bound, by the authority of conscience, to love and serve God, and to discharge the other duties of his station. They clearly assume, as certain, "that those precepts," to use the words of the pious Melancthon, "which learned men have committed to writing, transcribing them from the common feelings of human nature, are to be accounted as not less divine than those contained in the tables given to Moses; and that it could not be the intention of our Maker to supersede, by a law graven upon stone, that which is written with his own finger on the table of the heart." Hence, they declare, that "when the Gentiles, who have not the law," that is, the written law, "do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves; which show the works of the law to be written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

5. The sacred writers, so far from insinuating that attention to ritual observances will compensate for the neglect or violation of the duties of morality, declare, in the strongest terms, that the former is inferior to the latter, and that, when attempted to be substituted in room of truth and righteousness, is offensive to God. Hence the expressions used in reference to the observance of the divinely-appointed institutions of Moses, when that observance was designed to serve as a covert for hypocrisy and iniquity. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from



before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”\*

6. The inference from this is obvious. Would the writers of Scripture have thus uniformly recognised the eternal principles of moral obligation, had they not been under supernatural guidance? Would they have recognised these principles, too, notwithstanding the most seductive temptations occasionally to act otherwise? When philosophers have so generally erred, when treating of this subject, how did it happen that they were capable of exhibiting with perfect clearness the foundation of morals, and the immutability and sacredness of moral obligation? We shall find the same wisdom shown,

7. (II.) In their representations of a future state. It is remarkable that Jesus and his disciples never undertake to give a minute description of the invisible world, or of the condition of its inhabitants. They speak of it in general terms, as everlasting life—an eternal weight of glory, a kingdom whose inhabitants are all righteous, and where the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed his people, and shall lead them to fountains of living water, while God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. On one occasion, our Lord said, in reply to a question that had been proposed regarding the future state, “They who are counted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be as the angels of God in heaven.” The apostle Paul, when alluding to the vision which had been afforded him of heavenly glory—in place of expatiating on so interesting a theme, which a man under the direction of ordinary wisdom would certainly have done—merely says, that he heard “things which it is not lawful for man to utter.” While he speaks of the state of future blessedness as consisting in deliverance from all evil, and in the possession of inconceivable good, he affirms, that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

8. We can see that there was much true wisdom shown by the sacred writers in this reserve which they maintained when speaking of the future state. There are reasons which approve themselves to our understandings as the best for this procedure.

9. In the first place, a contrary course would have been

\* Isa. i. 11—17.

vain. For it is not possible for us clearly to comprehend the circumstances of persons in another and a totally different state of being. In consequence of our present mode of existence, and of our connexion with this terrestrial scene, we are incapable of understanding the condition of disembodied spirits. How ineffectual and profitless, therefore, would have been the attempt to describe it. But,

10. In the second place, such description, though it had been possible, would have been injurious. The present is a state of moral discipline; and in order that the ends of Divine Providence may be accomplished, it is necessary that there should be no impatience felt for a removal from the trials and duties of this life to the enjoyments of another. The declaration of Scripture is in this respect in perfect harmony with the dictates of reason and experience. "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise." But could this needful patience have been fully exercised, had we been made acquainted with the condition of the spirits of just men made perfect, and had we a view of the immortal felicity and glory of our own departed friends? If it be asked, then, why even that revelation which has brought life and immortality to light, has not afforded us a clearer view of the occupations and enjoyments of futurity, we may observe, that the prospect of our future destination may be easily conceived to have been so clearly presented to our view, that the world would no longer have answered the purpose of a state of probation; nor would the business of life have afforded any object of sufficient magnitude to interest our passions and call forth our actions.

A sense of higher life would only damp  
The schoolboy's task, and spoil his playful hours:  
Nor could the child of reason, feeble man,  
With vigour through this infant being drudge,  
Did brighter worlds, their unimagined bliss  
Disclosing, dazzle and dissolve his mind.\*

11. This idea has been placed in a very happy point of view by St. Pierre, in his work entitled "Studies of Nature." "I recollect," says he, "that on my return to France, in a vessel which had been on a voyage to India, as soon as the sailors had perfectly distinguished the land of their native country, they became in a great measure incapable of attending to the business of the ship. Some looked at it wistfully, without the

\* Thomson's Liberty.

power of minding any other object; others dressed themselves in their best clothes, as if they had been going that moment to disembark; some talked to themselves, and others wept. As we approached, the disorder of their minds increased. As they had been absent several years, there was no end to their admiration of the verdure of the hills, of the foliage of the trees, and even of the rocks which skirted the shore, covered with sea-weed and mosses. The church spires of the villages where they were born, which they distinguished at a distance up the country, and which they named one after another, filled them with transports of delight. But when the vessel entered the port, and when they saw on the quays their friends, their fathers, their mothers, their wives, and their children stretching out their arms to them with tears of joy, and calling them by their names, it was no longer possible to retain a single man on board. They all sprang ashore, and it became necessary, according to the custom of the port, to employ another set of mariners to bring the vessel to her moorings."

12. What, then, would be the case were we indulged with a sensible discovery of those regions inhabited by those who are most dear to us, and who alone are worthy of our most sublime affections? All the laborious and vain solitudes of a present life would come to an end. But Nature has involved (a future state) in obscurity, and has planted doubt and apprehension to guard the passage.

13. The sacred writers, then, have manifested true wisdom in abstaining from minute descriptions of the rewards and punishments of a future state. But the question is, how came they to be under the guidance of this wisdom? It is certain that all others who have laid claim to divine illumination have been wanting in this particular, and have completely failed in their attempts to draw aside the veil of the invisible world. Mahommed represents his paradise as a paradise of sensual pleasure.\*

14. The same reserve which is shown in Scripture in describing the rewards of the righteous, is observed in regard to the punishment of the wicked. The fact is declared in repeated and awful terms; and for the purpose of awakening the fears of the impenitent, it is set forth by allusions to those

\* "By the promise of a paradise, filled with gratifications of the senses and the imagination, he endeavoured to captivate a people attached, above all others, to sensual pleasure."—Mill's Hist. of Mahomedanism, p. 14.

miseries which now come within our experience. But there is no description of the regions of woe. The writers of the Scripture denounce the terrors of the Lord, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil; but they give no further account of the nature of this fearful visitation, than what is included in such expressions as the following:—everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, whence the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest, day nor night. In place of yielding, as men might be supposed to do, who pretended to a superior knowledge of the invisible world, in gratifying the natural curiosity of the human mind, by giving minute descriptions of the nature of future punishment, they merely assure us of the tremendous reality, and in general, but most awful terms, point to the circumstances in which it is to consist.

15. Mahommed, on the contrary, has, in his Koran, been very exact in describing the various torments of hell; which, according to him, the wicked will suffer both from intense heat and excessive cold.

16. Why were the writers of the Scriptures, in this respect, more temperate, more accordant in their conduct with the soundest wisdom, than others? They also were Oriental teachers; and they addressed themselves to mankind without respect to difference of rank or station. But they only have spoken intelligibly concerning the future state, and with that reserve which reason suggests is most consistent with the present condition of man.

17. Though the belief of a future state has universally prevailed, nations and individuals have differed widely in their opinions of the particular kinds and degrees of enjoyment reserved for us. The Indian, enfeebled by age, or tortured by sickness, gladly resigns his breath, in hopes of receiving again the bow by which he had gained his sustenance and destroyed his enemies; and meeting again the dog who had been the faithful companion of his dangers and his toils. The hardy warrior of the North welcomed the hour of death, which was to carry him into the hall of Odin, where, in his imagination, the ghosts of departed heroes were permitted to remember and



to celebrate the exploits performed on earth. Virgil describes his heroes as engaged in the same pursuits, and attached to the same pleasures, which had been long familiarized and endeared to them in their former existence. Mahommed, too, in the sensual paradise which he announced, prepared for his followers scenes of the most alluring voluptuousness.

18. Now whatever allowance the man of deep reflection may make for the ignorance and superstition of barbarous countries, and whatever entertainment the man of refined taste may derive from the compositions of more enlightened writers, both surely will agree in approving the silence of the Scripture as to the particular state of things in a future state.

19. Christianity, holding up to us the prospect of our future existence, bids us now prepare for it by virtuous habits of thought and action; and leads us to believe that a real, an intimate, and most important connexion, subsists between the present life and that which is to follow it; though it surpasses our abilities to explain, and perhaps to comprehend, the particular powers with which we shall be invested, and the particular agency in which we are to be employed. Christianity may then be excused for not gratifying our curiosity on subjects to which our apprehensions are now utterly inadequate; and even were they more adequate, it would deserve our praise for informing us of what is true—that we are destined for immortality;\* and of the means by which we are to become capable of enjoying its glory and blessedness.

20. (III.) The sacred writers have shown the same wisdom in the manner in which they have treated the delicate and difficult topics—the freedom of the will, and the divine foreknowledge. The questions involved in these topics have furnished, in every age, inexhaustible matter of speculation as well as of contention to philosophers. In the ancient schools of Greece, it is well known how generally and how keenly they were agitated. Among the Mahommedans they constitute one of the principal points of division between the followers of Omar and those of Ali; and among the ancient Jews they formed the subject of endless dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It is scarcely necessary for me to add, what violent controversies they have produced, and still continue to produce, in the Christian world.

21. It will be acknowledged by all who have studied these

\* White's Sermons on Christianity and Mahommedanism, p. 425.

embarrassing subjects, that they are encompassed with difficulties which the human mind, in the present state, is unable to remove. That we have a freedom of choice between good and evil—and that when we deliberately do that which we know to be wrong, we render ourselves justly obnoxious to punishment—we are assured of by our consciousness as well as by our reason. Yet, it is not less certain, the supreme moral Governor of the universe must be perfectly acquainted with the limits of human agency, and that this agency must be subject to his control, in order to the maintenance of his government. We may, therefore, be satisfied, that though we cannot comprehend the mode of reconciling human liberty with the prescience and sovereignty of God, they are perfectly reconcilable. All candid and wise inquirers will acquiesce in the conclusion of St. Augustine on this subject, as equally pious and philosophical. “Wherefore,” says he, “we are nowise reduced to the necessity, either, by admitting the prescience of God, to deny the freedom of the human will; or, by admitting the freedom of the will, to hazard the impious assertion, that the prescience of God does not extend to all future contingencies; but, on the contrary, we are disposed to embrace both doctrines, and with sincerity to bear testimony to their truth—the one, that our faith may be sound; the other, that our lives may be good.”

22. Now, in the sacred Scriptures, these subjects are alluded to with a reserve, and at the same time with an explicitness, which indicates true wisdom. God is there represented as exerting an influence over the heart of man, while it is uniformly taken for granted that the exertion of such influence is not incompatible with human freedom. Accordingly, in some passages, mankind are addressed as if the formation of their character, and their future destination, depended on themselves; while, in others, they are reminded that the preparation and direction of the heart are from God. These sentiments are sometimes placed in immediate connexion: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” We thus obtain all the information necessary for our improvement or happiness to possess; all that is fitted to, make us humble, diligent, and watchful; to guard us against remissness on the one hand, and despondency on the other. While we are taught that, of ourselves, we can do nothing; we

know that, through the grace of God working in us, we can do all things.

23. The statements of the Koran on this subject furnish a striking contrast to those of Scripture. While the wisdom that dictated the latter is in perfect accordance with the moral constitution and present condition of man, that from which the former originated is clearly that of fallible man. On one of the most abstruse subjects upon which man has ever exercised his faculties, and which has, more than any other, displayed both the strength and weakness of the human intellect, Mahommed has pronounced with a positiveness consonant with the character of a wild fanatic.\*

24. In how different a manner are "the deep things of God" alluded to in the Scriptures! While we are taught to trace every mercy to his bounty, every blessing to his redeeming love in Christ, we are assured, by the most touching terms, that no one shall apply to him for pardon and acceptance in vain. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

25. (IV.) The writers of the New Testament have shown the divine wisdom by which they were guided, in adapting the religious exercises which they enjoined to the constitution and circumstances of man. In this respect they furnish evidence of their having been under the direction of Him who knows our frame, who is intimately acquainted with the human heart. When men who follow entirely their own judgment, prescribe forms of devotion, either for private or public worship, they naturally conclude, from their knowledge of the fickle and perverse character of the beings for whom they legislate, that they must positively fix, with the minuteness of detail, every circumstantial. This is an error, accordingly, into which all the authors of religious systems have fallen, with the exception of the penmen of Scripture.

26. It is exemplified, in a striking manner, in the Koran; which specifies the number of times in which, during the twenty-four hours, prayers are to be offered; and fixes the period at which each prayer is to be made. With similar exactness, it appoints the number and the extent of the fasts which are to be observed; and also the proportion of property which is to be given in alms. Thus the followers of Mahommed are led to

\* Mill's Hist. of Mahommedanism, p. 294.

believe, that mere abstinence is meritorious; and to view almsgiving as a work which they must practise because their law enjoins it, rather than the indication of a kind and dutiful frame of heart.

27. In what a different manner do our Lord and his Apostles speak of the duties of prayer, self-denial and beneficence! While they inculcate a diligent performance of the outward acts, they teach us, especially, to look to the state of the heart, and the principle by which we are influenced. They do not state, with minute precision, the exact degree of attention which ought to be given to the affairs of this life, but they command us to set our affections on things above, and to lay up treasure in heaven. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven." "Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."\*

28. Is not the divine wisdom manifest by the mode in which religious exercises and duties are here enjoined? This will appear in a striking light, if we contrast it on these points with the practical errors of the Mahommedans, who compensate themselves for the extent and painful exactness of their abstinence during the month Ramadan, by freely giving way to the reins of appetite on other occasions; "and who adhere to strict austerity while the sun is up, and think that this warrants a proportionate indulgence at its setting." Nor will the divine wisdom be seen with less advantage in the particulars alluded to, when we compare them to the subversion of all the essentials of Christianity, which the penances, fastings, austerities, and meritorious alms of the Romish Church, effected in the days of

\* Matt. vi.



ignorance, and still continue to produce where ignorance continues to prevail; and which, if they had been sanctioned instead of discouraged by the Gospel, would have afforded no slight argument against its divine authority.”\*

29. “The Mussulman is commanded, indeed, to be just and charitable; but justice and charity form only a small and subordinate part of his obedience. He must abstain from the innocent enjoyment of the bounties of nature, with a rigour which lessens the comforts of social intercourse. He must approach the Deity, not at the seasons of his own gratitude, but at prescribed hours, which must be attended to with such exactness, as tends, surely, to create ostentatious hypocrisy, or abject pusillanimity. In whatever situation he is placed, he must perform ablutions which often interfere with the practical duties of life; and of which the forms and circumstances would be ridiculous in the recital, if indeed they deserved not a severer appellation, when considered as the evidences of virtue and piety. To fill up the measure of his devotion, the Mahomedan must leave his friends, his family, and his country, and expose himself to the dangers of a tedious journey, through barren sands and beneath a burning sky, to visit the temple of Mecca, with ceremonies which alike corrupt the understanding, and degrade the dignity of a rational and immortal being.

30. Unlike the confined and narrow institutions of the Koran, the Gospel of Christ breathes a spirit of benevolence as universal as it is pure. Unconnected with the machinations of human policy, or the schemes of human ambition, it proposes to establish no other kingdom but that of righteousness and peace.†

31. [V.] I shall only advert to one other particular, in illustration of the accordancy of Scripture with the moral constitution and present circumstances of man, namely, the oracular and authoritative mode of teaching characteristic of the sacred writers generally, and of our Lord in particular. This peculiarity entirely agrees with their claims as teachers sent from God, who spoke as they were divinely instructed; and also with the condition of man in the present state. They speak with the confidence natural to persons who knew that what they uttered was the infallible truth of God; and who, therefore,

\* Sumner on the Evidences of Christianity, p. 217.

† White's View of Christianity and Mahommedanism, p. 449.

felt that they were not required, by disquisition and reasoning, to prove its consistency with the dictates of the human understanding. There is not a single instance, in the whole Bible, in which there is an attempt formally to prove the possibility of an extraordinary and predicted fact, or the reasonableness of a doctrine. If the Apostle Paul's argument, from analogy, in favour of the resurrection, against those who denied the credibility of that event, be supposed to be an exception to this remark, the endeavour of the Apostles to convince the Jews, out of their own Scriptures, that Jesus is the Christ, cannot justly be regarded in the same light. This was merely an appeal to that kind of evidence in proof of the divine mission of our Lord which was peculiarly adapted to the Jewish people. It was furnishing the necessary attestation of the validity of their own claims—a very different thing from an elaborate disquisition for the purpose of showing that the truths which they were authorized to communicate were worthy of acceptance.

32. This oracular and authoritative mode of teaching, which a philosopher or mere moralist would not have chosen, was suited to the character and situation of messengers from God. Having proved their commission, they rested the truth of what they delivered on the divine authority: they conceived that they said all that was required of them, when they added to their message an explicit intimation of its heavenly origin, in the words, "Thus saith the Lord."

33. This was pre-eminently the characteristic of our Lord's ministry. In place of communicating instruction by argumentation and disquisition, he authoritatively enjoins the precept, or declares the fact. "I say unto you, Swear not at all—I say unto you, Resist not evil—I say unto you, Love your enemies." A mere philosopher would doubtless be tempted to reason like a philosopher, when setting forth so extraordinary a fact as the resurrection of the dead. But how does our Lord teach the reality of this event? Merely by his simple affirmation; "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

34. The propriety of this conduct is quite evident on the supposition that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. It is natural and proper for men to reason with their fellow-mortals, when they aim at their instruction or conviction; but when the

Supreme Legislator condescends to make known his will, it is meet that he should speak with the authority which belongs to him. If Jesus had not really been what he claimed to be, how could he have observed, with such perfect consistency throughout his ministry, this oracular mode of instruction? In that case how could he have hoped to succeed with his countrymen, but by demonstrating the excellence of his precepts, and using the usual method of convincing them of the truth of his doctrines? But he declined the use of these methods; and adopted a mode suited to the divine character to which he laid claim. This mode he observed uniformly and consistently; and we are therefore entitled to consider it as forming a part of that body of evidence by which Jesus is proved to be the Son of God.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE UNITY OF CHRISTIANITY.

In the perfect unity of Christianity we have an answer to the apparent discrepancies between the Evangelists. The truth, the whole truth, remains uninjured and entire, after an unfriendly criticism has exaggerated existing variations. That we may be satisfied of this, we have only to look at the unity of the Gospel in its facts,—in its doctrines,—in its great and divine subject, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The facts of Christianity. The unity that pervades and connects these is admitted. Even Strauss, with all his efforts, cannot succeed in disproving the great fact of the Resurrection of our Lord. He cannot weaken the unanimous testimony of the witnesses who affirm that the Lord is risen indeed. All the other facts are so closely connected with this, that they hang upon it and are one with it.

2. The unity of the doctrines of the Gospel is very obvious. They are interwoven with every portion of the New Testament;—they are so, thoroughly and essentially; so that in the fragments of these Scriptures we can trace the outlines of the whole. “Let it be supposed that the Gospels have been hacked in pieces by Strauss, so completely as never more to resume their former proportions; the Book of the Acts remains entire; and should it perish, then there are all the Epistles, on each of which

might the defender of the Cross take his stand, nor fear to be defeated in contending for the faith."\*

3. As to the unity in the character of the great and divine subject of the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ, I have, in another part of this work, shown it at length. The character of Christ, in its moral grandeur, stands prominently out as drawn by his four biographers. It is unique, different from anything that has ever been exhibited to the world.

I have only to add, in respect to the unity of Christianity, that it uniformly presents itself to the world as a miraculous system. Jews and Pagans admit that it has laid claim to miraculous power for its support, and that by miraculous power it has been sustained. The miracles were admitted by the opponents of Christianity—by Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles: and the fact continued to be universally acknowledged, that Christianity was introduced into the world accompanied by mighty signs and wonders.

\* Voices of the Church, p. 238.



## BOOK VII.

### ON THE INTERNAL AND COLLATERAL EVIDENCES OF DIVINE REVELATION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.—HIS CHARACTER AND MINISTRY.

1. WHAT were the circumstances and character of this man before his conversion? Tarsus, the place of his birth, and the chief city of Cilicia, was rich and populous, and surpassed even Athens or Alexandria in the celebrity of its schools and the reputation of its learned men. Julius and Augustus Cæsar had conferred on its inhabitants the immunities and privileges of Roman citizens—immunities and privileges which Paul obtained by inheritance from his parents, and of which, in the course of his apostleship, when the occasion rendered it necessary, he availed himself. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, a descendant by both parents, as his own language would seem to intimate, of Abraham, the father of Israel. He had the best opportunities of acquiring in early life that knowledge of the learning and religion, the manners and customs of the Greeks, the traces of which are so frequent and visible in his writings.

2. Nor was he less distinguished by his opportunities of being well instructed in the learning of the Jews. He was sent to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel, the most celebrated of the Jewish teachers in his time, and who was had in reputation among all the people. His own words, in which this fact is narrated, are, "Born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers." When he had completed his education, he connected himself with the sect of the Pharisees, to which sect his father also belonged. Being in the twenty-sixth year of his age, as is supposed, when our Lord began his public ministry, he, doubtless, had listened to his doctrines, and witnessed his miracles; and we learn from

the sacred history, that he, if he was not active in prompting to the condemnation of the martyr Stephen, at least most fully approved of the deed; for as they cast him out of the city and stoned him, the witnesses laid down their clothes at Saul's feet.

3. As Judea was without a Roman procurator during a few years after the removal of Pontius Pilate, the Jewish rulers were not restrained in the violence with which they persecuted the disciples of Jesus. In Saul they found an apt and zealous instrument, whom they employed in executing their purposes.\* "At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison." We might have thought that a young man possessed of his sensibility would have relented when he heard the martyr Stephen praying for his murderers, and that henceforward he would refrain from all measures of active hostility against persons so inoffensive as the disciples of Christ. But from this era he became the furious and unsparing persecutor, allowing none to escape but on condition of blaspheming Jesus; and volunteering his service to pursue, with unabated violence, all who fled from Jerusalem. Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

4. With this commission, Saul, accompanied with suitable associates, proceeded to Damascus, a city of Syria, and which was situated at a great distance from Jerusalem. The high priest and sanhedrim must have exercised a jurisdiction over the Jewish synagogues in other countries, otherwise the commission granted to this persecutor would have been of no avail; and as in Damascus there were several synagogues, and many who believed in Jesus, it held an important place in the eyes of those who designed nothing less than the utter ruin of the Christian cause. It was, therefore, with alacrity, under the influence of an unenlightened mind and enmity to the truth, that this company of persecutors pursued their journey, till, as they drew near the city, Saul was surrounded by a blaze of

\* Acts viii. 1—3.

light far brighter than the unclouded rays of the meridian sun. "Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven ; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." This circumstance is related by Saul himself, in his defence before king Agrippa; and from his statement we learn that they all fell to the ground, being overcome with fear and reverence; and that he was not only converted to the faith which it had been his earnest endeavour to destroy, but called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God. "As I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people; and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." \*

5. We are not told whether the persons who accompanied Saul were made the partakers of that forgiving and redeeming mercy which was so freely and richly extended to him. After they had risen from the ground, on which they had lain prostrate, they stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. "And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." This was the natural expression of his contrition, convinced and humbled as he was,

\* Acts xxvi. 12—19.

in the review of his guilt as a persecutor and blasphemer; and from this deep and genuine repentance, arose to heaven earnest, unfeigned, and believing supplications to Jesus. "Behold," said the Lord to Ananias, "he prayeth." In the outward form of his duty, he had often, as a Pharisee, engaged before; but with new and just apprehensions of God and himself, he was abased now in his presence, felt the enormity of his iniquity as the chief of sinners, and that he was poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; and, utterly renouncing his own righteousness, he cried for mercy to that Saviour who had arrested his course, by appearing to him in the way. His blindness, during three days, which, perhaps, was occasioned by the splendour of that light which had shone round about him, might be intended to represent to him the blindness of his mind while ignorant of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, and till he was turned from darkness unto marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

6. Ananias, having heard of the character and determination of Saul, was afraid to go, in obedience to the divine command, and inquire for him. "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat he was strengthened. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."\* Thus was Saul, the bold and determined persecutor, miraculously arrested in the height of his violence against the disciples of Christ, made the partaker of free and sovereign grace, and called to be an apostle of the faith which he was so zealous to destroy.

7. The conversion of Saul was manifestly designed to corroborate the evidence that attests the truth and divine authority

\* Acts xi. 13—18.



of Christianity. This view of the subject would furnish ample scope for much enlargement; but we must content ourselves by noticing the more prominent objects which present themselves as we hasten over this extended field of observation.

8. It is obvious that the conversion of a person of Saul's previous habits and connexions, possessing his learning and talents, and sound and penetrating judgment, was an accumulation to the strength of the evidence which proves the resurrection of our Lord, and the truth of the doctrines founded upon it. If the reason which he himself assigns be considered as the true one—and no other can be given—for his renouncing all the prospects that were opening up to him of wealth, and fame, and honour, and going over to the party which he himself had persecuted and attempted to destroy, at the very hour when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against them, and persevering amid manifold trials and sufferings to proclaim the resurrection and supremacy of our Lord; then it undoubtedly follows, that the glorious Gospel, of which he was the accredited apostle, is the very truth of the living God.

9. Is it alleged that he was an impostor, and that he said what he knew to be false, with a view to deceive? Such a surmise could only be warranted when it could be proved that he had motives of an earthly and temporal nature sufficient to induce him to undertake such an imposture. But what were the worldly inducements held out to the apostle Paul? He whom he owned as his Master and Lord, and whose ambassador he was, had been crucified by the command of Pontius Pilate and the Jewish rulers; and his Apostles, though proving that their Lord was risen by the miraculous powers with which he had invested them, were exposed to the severest persecution. In the severities exercised against them, and all who believed the doctrines which they preached, Saul had taken an active part; and it was at the very hour when he contemplated with satisfaction the consternation he should spread among all who were of this way in Damascus, that he became the disciple of Jesus. In making this change, did he not forsake the path of worldly honour and fame, and the friendship of those who had wealth, and dignity, and power at their disposal? Did he not form an alliance with the poor and the persecuted, and bring on himself poverty and reproach, and constant exposure to bonds, and imprisonment, and death? Were not these the circumstances in which he continued to discharge the duties of his

apostleship, even to the close of his life? "Unto this present hour," said he to the Corinthians, "we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour, working with our own hands." "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought," said he to the Thessalonians, "but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you." "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel," said he in his farewell address to the church of Ephesus; "yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me."

10. How little he was influenced by the love of power and superiority in the change which he made, is manifest from the whole of his subsequent history, and from the spirit that breathes throughout his writings. How remote is this passion from the language in which the apostle speaks of himself and of his labour, in which he describes himself as not worthy of being called an apostle, as being less than the least of all saints, as being the chief of sinners. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." In place of being elated by the advantages he derived from his education and learning, and superior knowledge of the world, he counted these, and all other attainments, but as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and looked for success in his ministry to the efficacy of the Gospel, and the power and demonstration of the Spirit which accompanied it. He came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, that the faith of those who believed should not stand in the wisdom, of man, but in the power of God.

11. In becoming the disciple of Christ, Saul could not hope to gain any earthly advantage; whereas, he voluntarily relinquished all that man is accustomed to value and to hold dear:—the fortune which his education and acquirements had ensured to him; the growing reputation which his learning and talents created for him; the powerful and literary friends that were endeared to him by numerous ties; and what was at one time, in his esteem, more precious than all—the righteousness of the

law, according to which he was blameless. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."\* In making this sacrifice, what were the sufferings to which he exposed himself—sufferings which, at his conversion, he was foretold should be great, for Christ's sake? What patience, and resignation, and fortitude, were requisite to endure those dangers, and privations, and sufferings, which he himself has recorded? Amidst labours and cares which were incessant, he often wanted the common necessities of life, the most ordinary sustenance and raiment; and to avoid, even in appearance, every ground for the imputation that he sought only his temporal advancement, he sometimes wrought with his own hands for the support of himself and his assistants in the ministry. When constrained, in self-vindication, to take notice of some of his doings and trials, he says, "I am in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."† Who, possessed of reason and understanding, would have made so mighty a sacrifice of all earthly good, and subjected himself, and all who were associated with him, to such privations and sufferings, from any other motive than the deepest convictions of the truth, divine authority, and infinite importance of the gospel to the present and future well-being of man?

12. But even supposing this sacrifice to have been made, and these sufferings endured, for the purpose of advancing an

\* Philipp. iii. 8—12.

† 2 Cor. xi. 23—28.

imposture, how could he have succeeded in his enterprise—he who had been the persecutor of those with whom, on this supposition, he was in concert, and who, after his conversion, in place of going to Jerusalem, to learn from the Apostles their doctrine, retired for three years into Arabia? The circumstances in which he was placed, the means which he adopted, the difficulties which he had to encounter, rendered success in his enterprise, had it been of human origin, impossible. He had to contend with the whole weight of the Jewish authority, far as it could reach, through the synagogues scattered over the Roman empire. He had to combat with the power and policy of the magistrates engaged in support of that idolatrous worship, which was interwoven with civil government, over the whole heathen world. He had in direct opposition to him the influence, the credit, and craft of the priesthood; interested themselves, and their numerous dependants, in supporting a system from which they derived their gain and power; and for the maintenance of which they could employ not only their own devices, but the power of the magistrate and the zeal of the people. He had to move, wherever he went, against the tide of public opinion; more especially when he addressed himself to the Gentiles, whose prejudices against himself, as a Jew, were violent, and whose antipathy was extreme to the doctrines he promulgated—doctrines which were at variance with all their religious tenets, and which reproved and condemned them for having changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and served the creature more than the Creator. And in an age more refined than any that preceded it, when learned men and philosophical sects were numerous and powerful, and when men in all ranks and offices, who pretended to superiority of knowledge and virtue, whether in the magistracy, the army, or on the throne, ranked themselves under the banners of one or other of them, the apostle Paul, in publishing the gospel, attacked their pride, and had arrayed against him all the hostility which they could command. With the tenets of sceptics and atheists—as were the greater number of them—or even with the notions of the Platonists and Stoics, who deemed it a thing incredible that God should raise the dead, how could the doctrines which Paul preached be mingled? They were fundamentally at variance, and diametrically opposite; and the



prevalence of Christianity, as it subverted the favourite systems of philosophers, not less than the idolatrous system of the priesthood, rendered Paul the object of the bitterest resentment—that of mortified pride.

13. What were the means by which he successfully encountered these obstacles and enemies? Was it by the charms of eloquence that he withstood and overcame the authority of philosophers, the power of princes, and the deep-rooted prejudices of the people? Eloquence of a high order he undoubtedly possessed; but to this he ascribed none of his success, because his ministry was so framed, that his speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom.\* Yet, without any human power to aid him, and with all the power in the world against him, in the most refined age, and subjected to the keenest scrutiny, and to certain exposure had his pretensions been those of an impostor, the word which he preached mightily prevailed, disciples were made over the whole world, from the palaces of the Cæsars down to the hamlets of the barbarians. We can account for this only by receiving as true the cause which he himself assigns—the divine origin of the gospel, and the power of the Spirit of God accompanying it. “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”† The truth of this statement was not only confirmed by the universal prevalence of the gospel, but by the numerous miracles which Paul and his fellow-apostles wrought in attestation of its truth and divine authority—miracles of such a nature, and performed in such circumstances, as to place their reality beyond a suspicion. “Christ,” says he, “hath wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that, from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”‡

14. As the conversion and apostleship of Paul could not be the result of imposture, neither could it be the effect of enthusiasm. He had indeed the qualities of an ardent as well as

\* 1 Cor. ii. 1—4.

† Gal. i. 6—18.

‡ Rom. xv. 18, 19.

a powerful mind, but his writings and history prove him to have been possessed of mental endowments very remote from those which characterise enthusiasts. Leaving out of sight the doctrines which he taught, and fixing our view on the events of his life, we may challenge the world to produce an instance in which he was surpassed in the soundness of his judgment; in his prudential regard to his own safety, when that was compatible with a good conscience; and in his unceasing endeavours to advance the peace and charity of mankind. A heated imagination, operating on a weak mind, might have increased the violence of a persecutor, by leading him to suppose that he was doing God service by destroying his fellow-creatures; but it could have no tendency, even in the case of a weak mind, and still less, if possible, in regard to Paul, to change the persecutor into a friend, a disciple, an apostle. Besides, there were several persons journeying with Saul, to witness the circumstances which attended his conversion, who knew and who would tell whether these circumstances were such as he declared them to be; whether at noon-day a light more resplendent than the sun shone about; whether they heard a voice addressing their leader; and whether, overawed by fear and reverence, they all fell to the ground. If we suppose that they all might be deceived, we must suppose much more—that it was by enthusiasm that Paul spoke in the different tongues of the numerous tribes and nations among whom he preached the gospel; that it was by the power of enthusiasm that, in the presence of a Roman deputy, he inflicted the punishment of blindness on Elymas the sorcerer; and that it was by the power of enthusiasm that he arrested the laws of nature, and made the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dead to live. No; the conversion and apostleship of Paul afford evidence which can never be gainsaid, of the reality of the Saviour's resurrection, and of the truth and divine authority of Christianity.

15. Having said so much on this part of the subject, I need not enlarge on another design in the conversion of Saul—the selection of a suitable instrument for the diffusion of the gospel among all nations. Miraculous qualifications he doubtless possessed, in common with the other apostles, but as God does not work miracles when he can accomplish his purposes by ordinary means, he fixed upon one whose natural and acquired endowments peculiarly fitted him for that great work to which

he was sanctified and separated. "He is a chosen vessel unto me," said the Saviour concerning him, "to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." His early acquaintance with Grecian as well as Jewish learning; the habits which he had formed in the society in which he moved; his industry, patience, fortitude, and persevering ardour, fitted him, by that grace which renovated and rightly directed all his faculties, for being the apostle and ambassador of Christ to the Gentiles. This will more fully appear by considering some of those principles by which he was characterised in the discharge of the duties of his high office. One of the most obvious of these is his unwearied zeal, united with prudence. During a short period, after his conversion, he remained in comparative retirement, probably that he might acquire, by the light of the Spirit, a more accurate knowledge of the Scriptures of the prophets, and thus be fitted for proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. How rapid and extensive afterwards were his movements during the space of about thirty years! hastening with the news of salvation, with an ardour peculiarly his own, from city to city, and from hamlet to hamlet, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, and from Rome and Athens to the islands of the sea. To his own countrymen he first announced the gospel, and then he turned with his message to the Gentiles. Believing that He who had invested him with the authority of an ambassador had the heathen given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, he flew, as it were, on the wings of heavenly zeal and love, diffusing light, and peace, and joy around him, and extending the conquests of the Redeemer over nearly the whole of habitable Asia and Europe. Mountains piled on mountains, and clothed with eternal snows, could not stay his course; nor was it arrested by difficulties of still greater magnitude—the bonds and afflictions that everywhere awaited him, the perils of waters, the perils of robbers, the perils by his own countrymen, the perils by the heathen, the perils in the city, the perils in the wilderness, the perils in the sea, the perils among false brethren. Yet, while he was borne along over all obstacles and enemies in his unwearied zeal, he acted in all circumstances with the prudence requisite to attain the great and glorious object of his ministry. "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a

Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some: and this I do for the gospel's sake."\*

16. Another principle which characterised him in the exercise of his apostolic office was, his undeviating and zealous adherence in all circumstances to the same object. Whether in labours or in sufferings, whether in prison or at large, whether discoursing to the Jews or reasoning with the Gentiles, his aim was to advance the kingdom of God, and to win souls to the Redeemer. So constantly was this object present to his mind, that, during the two years of his first imprisonment in Rome, he employed himself, with his wonted ardour and diligence, in expounding to his own countrymen, and testifying the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening; and also in teaching to the Gentiles those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence. In addition to these labours, he wrote, during this period, his epistles to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon;—epistles in which we have an epitome of the doctrine of Christ, and from which we learn the peace and heavenliness of his own mind. While he, the ambassador of Christ, was in bonds, it was his consolation that the word of God was not bound—that he could thus send it forth to the churches he had planted, to be by them multiplied and circulated over the world, and till the end of time. When freed from his bonds, he hastened to pursue, with unabated ardour, his former course; the same great object occupies his thoughts, and engages his efforts and his energies; and reckoning life valuable only as it was made subservient to this, all his actions proclaimed, "To me to live is Christ." When, a second time, he was imprisoned in Rome under Nero, when unexampled cruelties were inflicted on all who called on the name of Jesus, when the dangers which thickened around the apostle were so great as even to deter his friends from approaching him—his heart, his time, his prayers, were consecrated to the same object; for its furtherance, he wrote to Timothy the last of his epistles, in which this greatest of mere

\* 1 Cor. ix. 19—23.



human benefactors to our world—this conqueror, who had carried, by the power of his risen and glorified Lord, the banner of the cross triumphant over the ruins of the kingdom of darkness—anticipating his martyrdom, addressed the beloved evangelist in language befitting the Christian hero and the ambassador of Christ:—"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine. Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing."

17. A third feature which characterised the apostle in the discharge of the duties of his office was, the greatest fidelity united with gentleness and candour. His fidelity was shown in the whole tenor of his conduct. While his disinterestedness was unbounded, while he acted with judgment and discretion to the Jews and Gentiles, he never compromised truth to either. When a fellow-apostle, in compliance with the prejudices of the Jews, was induced to dissemble, he was reproved and restored by Paul. When his Gentile converts were in danger of being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, how deep was his concern, and unwearied his efforts, to recover them from the snare! In all the circumstances in which he is presented to our view—whether pleading before kings, or reasoning with philosophers, or in communicating the gospel to the illiterate—he shows the same sense of the work of the soul, and the same faithfulness to his Lord. And yet this undeviating fidelity, because it proceeded not from harshness but from principle, was united with extreme gentleness and charity. The kind of arguments by which he exhorted others to the exercise of these virtues, show that they had their abiding abode in his own heart. "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels

of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

18. Finally, the apostle uniformly showed, in relation to the great objects of his ministry, the liveliest sensibility united with firmness. In so glorious an aspect did the religion he embraced appear to his view, that it still more powerfully awakened and enlarged his energies ; that it inspired him with an elevation of feeling and sentiment, in fulfilling the ministry with which he was entrusted, which the world regarded as madness ; and that it made him consider his frame of mind, even when warmed with the contemplation of the love that passeth knowledge, as too cold for preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. So vast and overpowering were his views of the glory of the Redeemer, so deep his impression of his great and accumulating obligations, that, for the sake of the single object that filled all his soul, he became insensible to the stripes, and the bonds, and imprisonments, which he suffered ; he stood unmoved amid all the infirmities, and persecutions, and distresses, that assailed him ; he voluntarily relinquished the pleasures of literature, and wealth, and fame, on account of that one pre-eminent attainment that was so dear to him ; he presented all the firmness, without any of the self-sufficiency of Stoicism, to the power of Rome wielded for his destruction ; none of these things moved him, neither counted he his own life dear unto himself, that he might accomplish the purpose of his high vocation ; but so deep was the hold which Christianity had taken of his affections, that he whom no afflictions could change from his resolution, whose reasonings made Felix tremble, whose eloquence made Agrippa waver, and whom even the cruelties of Nero could not disturb, is all sensibility, and weeps with the helplessness of childhood when he conceives the honour of his Lord to be tarnished. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL A PROOF OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.

1. THE success and ultimate triumph of Christianity over the most formidable obstacles, by means of instruments utterly inadequate to the effects produced, have justly been considered as decisive proofs of its truth and divine authority.

2. The early and rapid promulgation of the gospel is a fact undeniable, and universally acknowledged. It is incorporated with the history of mankind; and its reality is so fully established, that it cannot be gainsaid. It was first proclaimed at Jerusalem, where, as soon as the apostles announced it, after the resurrection of our Lord, three thousand persons embraced it; and to these were quickly added multitudes of converts to the Christian faith. It spread from Jerusalem throughout Judea and the surrounding regions; was speedily carried to the heathen world, and was preached with equal success; was received by numbers at Antioch, at Derbe, at Iconium, at Philippi, at Corinth, and at Ephesus; and was set forth, not without effect, in the audience of philosophers and senators at Athens, the instructress of the world. It was here that one of its most distinguished teachers presented himself as the messenger of God, and declared that the "times of former ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent; because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

3. The gospel soon advanced, in its triumphant progress, to imperial Rome, where it was received by many thousands. From the capital, it was rapidly disseminated throughout the provinces, spread from city to city, and from hamlet to hamlet, and established itself (in little more than thirty years after the ascension of Christ) in Greece, Italy, and Asia; in Spain, in France, in Germany, and in Britain. It continued to extend its dominion; to bring under its influence the civilized and the barbarous, the bond and the free; and to own its triumphs in remote regions into which the Roman armies had never penetrated. It brought under its control men of all ranks and characters; philosophers, senators, and legislators; persons of the most opposite opinions, habits and circumstances; and

even some of the occupants of the palaces of the Cæsars. It had its disciples in the camp and in the senate; and so great was the multitude of its converts, that the heathen temples began to be generally deserted. At the end of the second century, the kingdom of Christ, to use the words of Tertullian, was everywhere extended, everywhere received; he reigns everywhere, is adored in all places. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Capadocia, the inhabitants of Pontus, and Asia, and Pamphylia; they that dwell in Egypt, and they who live in Africa beyond Cyrene; Romans and strangers; Jews, and other nations in Jerusalem; the various sorts of people in Getulea; the many countries of the Moors; all the borders of Spain; the different nations of Gaul; and those parts of Britain which the Romans could not reach, even they are subject to Christ; the Germans and Scythians, and many other obscure nations, with many provinces and islands scarcely known to us; in all these the name of Christ, lately as he came, reigns. Thus did the word of the Lord grow mightily and prevail, till at length the Emperor Constantine avowed himself a Christian, and established Christianity throughout the empire. Thus, to use the well-known words of one of its enemies, "a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the capitol."\*

4. Upon this astonishing success of Christianity is founded an argument for the truth and divine authority of our religion—an argument which was suggested by the address of Gamaliel to the sanhedrim; "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."† Before we can estimate the force of this argument in regard to Christianity, we must advert to the circumstances in which it was successful in rapidly extending itself over the world; since, it is manifest, we are not warranted to consider the mere prevalence of a doctrine as an infallible proof of its divine authority. But the Christian religion was promulgated in despite of the most powerful opposition, and by an instrumentality which was totally inadequate to the effects produced.

\* Gibbon.

† Acts v. 38, 39.



5. (I.) The idea of a universal religion, to the exclusion of every other, was new to the world. The command of Christ to his apostles was novel even to them: "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This charge was offensive to the Jews, who gloried in their hereditary privileges and distinctions; and it was not less novel or offensive to the Gentiles, who were ignorant of God as the common parent of mankind, and the common benefactor of the human race. The notion of a religion thus adapted to, and designed for the whole family of man, had never before been heard of, and was regarded as the dream of enthusiasm, a visionary scheme, impracticable and impossible. "A man must be very weak," says Celsus, the early adversary of Christianity, "to imagine that the Greeks and barbarians in Asia, Europe, and Lybia, can ever unite under the same system of religion." The universal adaptations of the Christian religion, and the efforts of its disciples to propagate it among all nations, soon proved that the tolerance of the Romans proceeded not from a knowledge of the natural rights of man, civil or religious, but from the principle that all men should be allowed to worship their local deities, the gods of their fathers, and of their respective nations. This species of toleration was exclusively adapted to the systems of polytheism that then obtained in the world; and it terminated, in regard to the followers of Jesus, when Christianity proclaimed the one living and true God as the only object of religious worship and adoration. The new religion claimed not only universal, but exclusive regard. It not only commanded all men to worship the living and true God through Jesus Christ the only Mediator, but it denounced, as vanities and lies, the imaginary deities of the heathen. Its disciples not only refused to worship any of these gods themselves, but they felt bound, by the commission which they had received, to persuade others to follow their example. And when we consider their success, even in the commencement of their enterprise, in inducing multitudes in every place to embrace the faith of Christ, and to renounce the religions authorized by the state—need we wonder that they roused the opposition of the Roman government—the inveterate hostility of philosophers of every sect; and that the priests of all nations, the diviners, augurs, and managers of oracles; the

artificers, whose craft was in danger; the statuaries, shrine-mongers, sacrifice-sellers, and incense-merchants, and all others who received gain from the popular superstition; were not only active persecutors themselves, but zealous instigators of all over whom they had any influence to persecute?

6. (II.) Some of the fundamental facts essentially connected with the gospel were highly unfavourable to its general reception. In place of having a fitness to engage the regard of mankind, they had a natural tendency to alienate their affections, and to produce aversion. Hence the Apostle Paul tells us, as the result of his experience in promulgating the gospel, that the preaching of Christ crucified was unto the "Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." It was to have been expected, that Christ crucified, in whatever view considered, whether as an atonement for sin, and the foundation of pardon and acceptance, or as a practical indication of the treatment which his disciples might look for from the world, would have been repulsive to Jews and Gentiles, and have led both to an indignant rejection of Christianity.

7. How could the Jews have welcomed the doctrine, that an individual of their own nation, whom their rulers had condemned and crucified, was nevertheless the great Prophet who had been promised, the true God in the form of man; that his death was designed as a sacrifice for sin, through which alone forgiveness and reconciliation with God might be obtained? This was at variance with the expectations which they had long and fondly cherished of a Messiah, whose advent and reign were to be accompanied with grandeur and glory, and who should elevate them to high distinction in that universal empire which he should establish. These expectations did not suffer them to regard Jesus with the coldness of indifference, even during his life; his poverty, and destitution of worldly pomp and greatness, united to his claim to the character of Messiah, awakened a feeling of rancorous hatred, which rested not till they had inflicted upon him the punishment of death, in a form the most painful and dishonourable. Still more likely were they to continue their hatred, after they had procured his crucifixion, and had implored that his blood might be upon them and their children. To admit, then, that he was the only Redeemer of mankind, was to relinquish the ideas of worldly grandeur and majesty with which they

had been fascinated; and, what was not less difficult, it was to acknowledge that they had incurred the greatest guilt in having rejected him. In place of the Messiah which they had expected, and whom they in imagination contemplated as crowned with glory and success, they were presented, in Jesus of Nazareth, with a man who had been burdened with sorrows, who in their eyes had no form nor comeliness, who had been persecuted, derided, and put to death with malefactors. What proposal, therefore, could have been more repulsive to them, than salvation through the merits of one whose life was calamitous, and whose death was ignominious? With their views, his cross could not fail to prove a stumbling-block.

8. There were other things in the religion of Christ, as well as his death, deeply offensive to the minds of the Jews. Having been separated by their Creator from the surrounding nations, and having been distinguished from them by their freedom from polytheism and idolatry, they reflected with exultation on the peculiar privileges which, as a people, they had so long enjoyed, and reckoned on the continuance of the favour and protection of God, as their unalienable inheritance. The dispensation of religion under which they lived, having been appointed by God, and maintained by his special providence, they gloried in, as conferring on themselves high distinctions, and as an institution which was to be perpetuated throughout all ages.

9. Yet, in opposition to these favourite sentiments, Jesus announced, in the course of his own ministry, as he taught his apostles afterwards more fully to declare, that the Mosaic dispensation was to be abrogated; and that having prepared the world, as it was intended by divine wisdom, for the coming of the Messiah, and the universal diffusion of religion, its typical and splendid ritual should be abolished. "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness. I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." To the Jews, who firmly entertained the opinion that they exclusively enjoyed the special regard and protection of God, these sentiments were humbling to their pride, and calculated to awaken their inveterate hostility. It was not without difficulty that even the apostles were at length brought to

acquiesce in them, or to avow their belief in the principle, that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. When they acted on this principle, by preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, we are told that the Jews were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken of Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. On another occasion, when this apostle only alluded to the commission which he had received to go to the Gentiles, the allusion roused his Hebrew auditors almost to madness; they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live: and they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air.\*

10. It is impossible to conceive any doctrines more repugnant to the pride, the opinions, and the prepossessions of the Jews, than those which the apostles announced to them as the wisdom of God. They declared to them that there was salvation in no other than in Him whom their rulers had crucified, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved. In place of the temporal sovereign whom they had expected, they were commanded to receive a Redeemer from sin and everlasting misery, who had by his death made reconciliation for iniquity, and who, at the right hand of God, has all power in heaven and on earth. In place of being assured of the continued enjoyment of the exclusive favour of God to their nation, which they regarded as their unalienable honour and their highest distinction; they were told that their high pretensions were groundless, and that henceforth the Gentiles, indiscriminately, were to be made partakers with them of the blessings of the kingdom of God. In place of being taught to continue in the belief in which they had been educated—that a strict compliance with the Mosaic ritual was indispensable to the enjoyment of God's favour—they were expressly informed that the death of Christ alone, to the entire exclusion of the works of the law, was to form the ground of pardon and acceptance; that the Mosaic economy was abrogated; and that the temple in which they and their fathers had worshipped would soon be totally destroyed. If Christianity prevailed among this people; if it gained many myriads of converts among them soon after its first announce-

\* Acts xxii. 22.



ment, it is evident that it was not owing to its falling in with their national opinions and prejudices, but to other causes, which we hold to have been the strength of its evidence, and the supernatural power which attended it.

11. Nor were the prepossessions of the Gentiles, though resting upon different grounds, less powerfully opposed to the gospel. From a variety of causes, to which I shall not here advert, paganism enlisted the selfish and the sensual passions of all classes of the community in its support; and was peculiarly fitted to preserve its ascendancy over the human mind. In the most polished nations of antiquity, even in Greece itself—the residence of the most profound erudition, the only country in which literature was diffused among all ranks—the religious creed was in the highest degree revered; the slightest reflection against it cancelled every merit, and excited universal detestation and abhorrence. Even those of the higher orders who believed not in the popular superstitions, when Christianity was published, were inclined, both from interest and from a sense of duty, to support the established religion. It was interwoven with the government of the country, and the subversion of the one they regarded as involving the destruction of the other. Besides, a disbelief of the established religion of their country, as has been well remarked, has no tendency to dispose men for the reception of another; but, on the contrary, it generates a settled contempt of all religious pretensions whatever. General infidelity is the hardest soil which the propagators of a new religion can have to work upon.

12. But whatever may have been the scepticism of the ancient philosophers on the subject of religion in general, it is certain that they gave no countenance to any attempt to disturb the belief of the multitude in the system of idolatry which happened to be established. The accusation with which Socrates was charged, and which led to his condemnation and death, was, not that he dissuaded the people from worshipping the gods appointed by the laws to be revered, but that he himself did not esteem those to be gods which the city of Athens regarded as such, and that he had introduced other gods. The doctrine which he and all the philosophers held was, that all men should worship the gods of their respective countries; nor did they forget to reduce this maxim to practice, when they assumed the character of legislators, by prescribing to the people the giving of religious homage to a multitude of

deities. When we remember that every man, in those times, who had any pretensions to letters, in all the ranks and offices of life, whether in the senate, or at the bar, in the army, or upon the throne, was a disciple of one of the philosophical sects, and, consequently, the advocate for the established system of polytheism and idolatry; that this system was interwoven with the civil constitution of every government in the world but one, and, therefore, had the power of the prince and the magistrate in its support; that it had the aid and the influence of a priesthood that was neither unconcerned nor disinterested as to its continuance; and that the whole of mankind were its auxiliaries; in the feelings of veneration which it awakened; and in the base and potent passions for which it furnished gratification—when we reflect on these particulars, we may form some conception of the extent of that darkness that covered the earth when our Lord appeared, and of the gross darkness that covered the people. Yet it was against this system of error and idolatry, advocated by philosophers, entwined around the throne of princes, authorized by the laws, enforced by the magistrate, venerable from age, captivating to the senses, and having in its favour the full flow of public opinion, that the apostles of Christ went forth, unpatronised, unprotected; with no power to shield them but that of God, with no advantages but the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with no weapon but eternal truth, and with no less an aim than the entire subversion of idolatry over the world, by turning men from darkness unto light, and from the dominion of Satan to the service of the living and true God.

13. The instrument by which they were to effect this mighty design, was the gospel of Christ—a religion which refused alliance to every existing system, and the claims of which could not be admitted without a total relinquishment of those of every other. Christianity—as inculcating the great doctrine of the unity of God, the Author, Preserver, and Governor of the universe, and maintaining his exclusive right to religious worship and adoration—was a direct contradiction to the notions of Deity universally entertained, and to the fundamental principles of the various religions of mankind. If it had allowed of a compromise, by permitting those who embraced it to have paid homage to the true God, in union with their idol deities, its rapid promulgation would not appear so wonderful; since “the enlargement of the catalogue of deities was in perfect

harmony with the principles of paganism, and was no more the adoption of a new religion than it would be, in the Popish Church, to add a saint to the calendar or a relic to the sacred collection." But Christianity set forth a claim to exclusive regard, represented the deities of the heathen as imaginary beings, denounced the divine displeasure against all who persisted in their worship, and commanded all men to turn from vain idols to the love and the service of the only living and true God.

14. Nor were the sufferings and death of Jesus less calculated to incline the Gentiles to an indignant rejection of the gospel. Was it possible, it was natural for them to ask, that the person whom it required them to believe to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, should have been born in poverty, have been condemned as a criminal, and have been doomed to crucifixion? This punishment was incomparably more disgraceful than any kind of death which is known in modern times; so ignominious was it reckoned, that the infliction of it was regarded as a consummating of the infamy and dishonour of the person who suffered it. What, then, would naturally be the feelings of the inhabitants of the Roman empire, when they were told that the Son of God, and the Redeemer of mankind, had died upon a cross? What would be their emotions when they were informed that, in the place of having been distinguished during his life by the extent of his conquests, and the dazzling glory of military greatness, he was known by the exercise of virtues which they held in little estimation—meekness, gentleness, patience under injury, and a forgiving disposition to his enemies? What would they think when they were commanded to place their whole trust for salvation and acceptance with God on the merits of his life, and on the efficacy of his death? Would they not be inclined to treat the proposal as an absurdity—to consider the preaching of the cross as foolishness? I observe,

15. (III.) That there was nothing in the natural instruments employed in promulgating the gospel fitted to diminish the force of these serious hindrances to its reception. They were Jews, a circumstance which of itself was extremely disadvantageous to them in the eyes of the Greeks and Romans, who were accustomed to despise their nation as unsociable, intolerant, and but little acquainted with philosophy and the fine arts. They were men, besides, of no distinguished eminence,

who had no pretensions to literature, or wealth, or rank, or authority, or to the advantages acquired from a knowledge of the world. They were chiefly fishermen of Galilee, poor, unknown, illiterate; who had, till they engaged in this extraordinary mission, been confined to a toilsome occupation; who were strangers to the accomplishments derived from a liberal education, and to the captivating graces of eloquence. They were entirely unfurnished with human means, destitute of friends, without the countenance of the great and powerful, and unacquainted, when they entered on their office, with every tongue but the vernacular dialect of their country. Such was the character of the agents who were employed in the first diffusion of the gospel.

16. What was the character of the age in which they exercised their ministry? It was distinguished by its refinement and literature; it was a period in which the arts and sciences were generally known, and had reached a high degree of cultivation; it was when the dominion of Imperial Rome included the civilized world. This was the time when the first preachers of Christianity, with natural qualifications such as I have represented, went forth to establish a new and an uncompromising religion over the world. What could instruments so feeble, and, in human estimation, so unsuited to the purpose, be expected to have achieved in an enterprise in which they had to encounter the philosophy, the eloquence, the power, and the religion of mankind? Yet, conformably to their commission, they preached the gospel to every creature; in the sanhedrim and synagogues of the Jews, and in the forums of the Gentiles. They simply proclaimed salvation by the cross of Christ, without the use of any of the means by which other teachers conciliated and engaged the attention of their auditors. Even that apostle, who, from his acquired advantages, was in some measure capable of availing himself of such means, declined them; and told the Corinthians, in the following words, the manner in which he fulfilled his mission among them: "When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling: and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."



17. Was it possible for an instrumentality such as this to have been everywhere successful in planting the standard of the cross ; and to have borne the gospel in triumph from Jerusalem round about into Illyricum, and from Imperial Rome to the British isles? Were not the character and natural qualifications of the agents employed such as to have awakened invincible prejudice against them, and to have led mankind to have treated them as unworthy of serious regard, as the filth of the world, and offscouring of all things? Their rapid and universal success, in direct opposition to the natural course of things, could not possibly have taken place by their own agency merely ; and can only be accounted for by admitting the operation of that mighty cause to which they invariably ascribed it : “ We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

18. Owing to the very different circumstances in which we who live in Christian countries are placed from those of the persons to whom the gospel was first addressed, we cannot, without considerable effort of mind, perceive all the weakness and meanness of the instruments that were employed in its promulgation. “ To us,” as Dr. Campbell observes, “ the very title, apostles, conveys certain ideas of respect and dignity, which, as it were, hide from us the meanness and obscurity of their outward state. In order, therefore, to rouse our attention to this circumstance, of the utmost importance to the right understanding of my argument, let us consider what would be, I say not probably, but certainly, the effect of such an attempt in our own age and nation, made by such ill-provided, and, as we should say, despicable instruments, unaided from above, in opposition to all the established powers, religion, laws, and learning of the country. Yet we have no reason to believe that our fishermen are, in any respect, inferior to the fishers of those days on the lake of Geneseret. It would not, perhaps, be difficult to prove, that in point of education, in this part of the island at least, they are even superior. But to render the parallel complete, and to make it tally perfectly

with the infidel hypothesis about the promulgation of the gospel, we must conceive something still more marvellous; namely, that a few such men in this country, so wretchedly accoutred, so unfurnished with human means, unacquainted with every language but their mother tongue, of which they can speak only a provincial and barbarous dialect, form the vast project of traversing Holland, France, Germany, and the other countries on the Continent, in order to make converts abroad, to impose on all mankind, and to publish throughout the world a scheme of doctrine they had previously concerted among themselves. With the least reflection, we see the absolute impracticability of such a plan, when brought home to ourselves. Indeed, it is so glaringly impracticable, that it is not easy for us to conceive that such an extravagance could ever enter into the heads of men in their senses. Yet not one jot better equipped were the apostles, than such projectors as I have now supposed. In point of language, a most essential circumstance, they could be no way superior."

19. But the apostles were, notwithstanding, successful in widely promulgating Christianity, in the face of the most violent and determined opposition. In an age in which, as has been noticed, knowledge was generally diffused, and which is distinguished in the annals of the world as more learned, more philosophical, and, consequently, more discerning than any other, these few individuals, so unsuited for such an enterprise, triumphantly diffused the gospel over the whole civilized, as well as many of the barbarous nations of the world. Their success, therefore, can only be accounted for by admitting the divine origin of that message of salvation which they proclaimed, and by having recourse to the concurring operation of His mighty power, who calleth things that are not as though they were, and who alone can destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Under the guidance and protection of Omnipotence, they might well be confident that all opposition would be unavailing; that the mountains and the hills would be made low, and the valleys be exalted, and that, through their instrumentality, however despicable in human estimation the glory of the Lord would be made to appear, that all flesh might see it together, even as the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. In this confidence they rose superior to fear; felt assured that prisons and chains could not hinder the progress of the cause in which they were

embarked; that though they themselves might be in fetters, the word of the Lord could not be bound; they boldly challenged all human opposition, and said, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

20. Destitute of all human advantages, protected by no art, not recommended by the reputation of its Author, not enforced by eloquence in its advocates, the word of God grew mightily and prevailed. Twelve men, poor, and artless, and illiterate, we behold triumphing over the fiercest and most determined opposition; over the tyranny of the magistrate, and the subtilities of the philosopher; over the prejudices of the Gentile, and the bigotry of the Jew, they established a religion which held forth high and venerable mysteries, such as the pride of man would induce him to suspect, because he could not perfectly comprehend them; which preached doctrines pure and spiritual, such as corrupt nature was prone to oppose, because it shrunk from the severity of their discipline; which required its followers to renounce almost every opinion they had embraced as sacred, and every interest they had pursued as important; which even exposed them to every species of danger and infamy; to persecution, unmerited and unpitied; to the gloom of a prison, and to the pangs of death. "Hopeless as this prospect may appear to the view of short-sighted man, the gospel yet emerged from the obscurity in which it was likely to be overwhelmed by the complicated distresses of its friends and the unrelenting cruelty of its foes. It succeeded, in a peculiar degree and peculiar manner, under circumstances where falsehood must have been detected and crushed."\*

21. If some of the leading doctrines of the gospel formed serious hindrances to its general reception; and if, as we have seen, there was nothing in the natural instruments employed in its promulgation fitted to diminish the force of these obstacles; we shall see, by observing,

22. (IV.) That the persecution and suffering which attended the profession of it were also calculated to obstruct its progress. It might have been expected, that a religion such as the

\* "It was the age when inquiry was awake and active on every subject that was supposed to be of curious or useful investigation, whether in the natural or the intellectual world. It was, in short, such an age as imposture must have found in every respect the least auspicious to its designs; especially such an imposture as Christianity, if it had deserved the name."—White's Sermons on Christianity and Mahommedanism, comp. p. 134.

Christian would have been strongly resisted at its first promulgation; and authentic history informs us, that its early teachers and disciples endured persecution unparalleled as to its severity and extent. Circumstances were such as to require every one who embraced it to hold himself in readiness to relinquish his reputation, his ease, his fortune, and his life; and its profession was surrounded with terrors which none could disregard—with torments, chains, and death.

23. It was, therefore, the immediate interest of all to oppose and suppress Christianity; but who had any interest in helping, or in owning it? Was it the philosopher, whose wisdom it characterised as foolishness; to whose pride it was humbling, and whom it placed on a level, in regard to God and eternity, with the poor and the illiterate? Was it the priest, whose gods and whose gains it alike assailed? Was it the magistrate, who was the guardian of the religion of the State, flexible to his wishes, and subservient to his authority and control? Was it the people, whose deities it denounced as vanity and a lie, the indulgence of whose passions it prohibited; and in room of the splendid and magnificent ritual to which they had been accustomed, proposed to substitute the unostentatious worship of the living God? Was it the Jews, who had been taught by their prophets to look for the Messiah? They were bitter, active, and implacable in their hostility; everywhere zealous in kindling the fire of persecution, to consume the disciples of Jesus. Men of all ranks, and of every nation, were interested in opposing Christianity; and with the view of silencing, or of exterminating its advocates and disciples, heaped upon them reproach and dishonour, confiscated their goods, condemned them to the mines, tormented them on the wheel and the rack, tore them asunder between branches of trees, threw them to wild beasts, and crucified them with the head downwards. But in spite of suffering, their numbers greatly increased; till at length, in the time of Nero, they had become, in the language of Tacitus, a vast multitude.

24. Under this Emperor, memorable for his cruelty and crime, the first great and general persecution began. To give a more plausible colour to his calumny in charging the Christians with having set fire to the city, he put great numbers of them to death in a most cruel manner. They were covered with the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn to pieces of dogs, or nailed to crosses, or covered with inflammable matter,



and when the daylight failed, they were burned to give light at night. Great numbers were cut off by such means. Nor had this violent persecution ceased long, till the second, under Domitian, began, during which persons of the highest rank suffered martyrdom. Flavius Clemens, the Consul, a near relation of the Emperor, having become a Christian, was put to death in the time of his consulship; while his wife was banished. Persecution followed persecution during the three first centuries; in all of which, to use the language of Cyprian, God's saints were banished from their houses, were stripped of their estates, were loaded with chains, were shut up in prisons, were thrown to the wild beasts, were burnt alive. In consequence of these severities, great multitudes betook themselves to exile, had recourse to the deserts, and the mountains, and the dens and the caves of the earth, and preferred exposure to the dangers of famine and of wild beasts, rather than trust to the clemency of men who had divested themselves of humanity.

25. At length, the tenth persecution, more violent, if possible, than any that preceded it, took place under the Emperor Dioclesian. The persecution began by an imperial edict, which commanded that Christians should be deprived of their places of worship, and of the Scriptures, as well as of all their civil privileges and immunities. Many suffered death rather than surrender the sacred writings. All magistrates were enjoined to inflict the most exquisite tortures upon all Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, with the view of forcing them to renounce their religion. This command was executed with a brutal and exterminating zeal, which destroyed vast multitudes.

26. Such were the sufferings which accompanied the profession of Christianity in the early ages, which surely were sufficient to deter men who were influenced by worldly motives from becoming Christians. We can easily imagine that many persons, in so good a cause, might have laid down their lives at the gibbet, the stake, or the block; but to expire leisurely among the most exquisite tortures, when they might come out of them even by a mental reservation, has something in it beyond the natural strength of mortals. When it is considered, that there were multitudes of each sex, of every age, and of different countries and conditions—who, for near three hundred years together, made this glorious confession of their faith in the midst of tortures, and in the hour of death—must we not

conclude, that they were either of another make than men are at present, or that they were supported by supernatural influence, in avowing, in such circumstances, their conviction of the truth and divine authority of Christianity? None of these things moved them; neither counted they their ease, their honour, or their lives dear unto themselves, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. In the hottest conflict they never shrunk, but maintained their ground with a free confession, an unshaken mind, a divine courage; destitute, indeed, of external weapons, but armed with the shield of faith; in torments they stood stronger than their tormentors.

27. But the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. With all the governments on earth against it, and in the midst of combined and powerful efforts to suppress it, the word of the Lord mightily grew and prevailed. It prevailed not by the resistance made by its disciples, for they offered none; they endured tortures and death with the meekness and gentleness of Christ; they were made more than conquerors in the midst of tribulation and distress, and nakedness, and peril, and the sword; they overcame not by retaliating even when they became sufficiently numerous to be formidable to their enemies, but by pliancy and submission; they continued patiently to suffer, from century to century, till at length the doctrine for which they died triumphed over the world, subverted the temples and altars of the gods, silenced the oracles, and showed its transforming power in the many myriads whom it created anew in Christ Jesus.

28. Thus was it shown that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. By the humblest means—and, in human estimation, altogether unsuited—God furnished to mankind the brightest manifestation of his character and glory—accomplished the mightiest revolution which has ever taken place in the world, the consequences of which are to extend to the consummation of all things, and to continue through eternity. He made his Church, founded by a few despised individuals, to extend its boundaries in defiance of universal opposition; to rise, like Noah's ark, above the billows of that tide of persecution which had set in for its destruction; to survive the raging of the elements; and, after the waters had exhausted their violence, and had subsided, to rest in glory and triumph on the top of the mountains, and to be established above the hills. It fully verified the

emblematical representation of the bush that burned, and was not consumed. The fire of persecution burned intensely around it; the violence of the flame was maintained from age to age, with the view of utterly consuming it; but it still remained in all its beauty and life, and acquired new vigour and power from the efforts made for its extinction. At length, the passiveness of the sufferers vanquished their enemies; and the disciples of Christ, numerous in all lands, waved the peaceful banner of the cross over the world which they had conquered. "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel; who only doth wondrous things: And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen."

29. (V.) The bias and propensities of human nature were directly opposed to the reception of the Christian religion. It will be conceded by all, whatever views some may entertain of the extent of human corruption, that vice and immorality generally prevailed over the world when the gospel was first announced. It is unnecessary to prove what is not denied. The Jews, according to the testimony of Josephus, were extremely depraved. The idolatrous worship of the Gentiles was usually attended with the grossest profligacy; and the evil passions of human nature were indulged without any other restraint than that which the laws of the State or public opinion imposed. While we admit that there were some splendid exceptions to the general corruption of morals—some few individuals who rose superior to the age in which they lived, by noble exhibitions of temperance, probity, disinterestedness, or fortitude—we know, from the representations of the writers of those times, that the manners of the Greek and Roman world were very licentious. Even their moralists appear as libertines, when tried by the standard of the gospel. Nor did the world give any signs of melioration, or progressive improvement. In all those points which form the real distinction between vice and virtue, Athens and Lacedæmon were no better than Sardis or Babylon; and imperial Rome had no superiority over the Grecian democracies which it supplanted. Thales, Pythagoras, Solon, Socrates, Cicero, had effected no general change, either in the theory of religion or the practice of morals.

30. But the gospel, when it was proclaimed in the circum-

stances to which I have alluded, notwithstanding of its denouncing their deities as vanity, and their vices as meriting the wrath of God, was embraced by multitudes, into whom it infused its own pure and heavenly spirit. They not only renounced all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; but, in obedience to his authority, they subdued their passions, resisted temptation, and imitated the example of humility, charity, purity, and moderation, which he had left them. It was men who originally practised all the vices of paganism, whom Christianity arrayed with an assemblage of virtues purer than the disciples of the purest heathen philosophy had ever allowed themselves even to contemplate. It was in cities distinguished for their licentiousness that the gospel displayed its mighty efficacy, by accomplishing a thorough renovation on many of its inhabitants. It was at Corinth that a Church was planted, consisting of those who had been idolaters, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners; but who were justified, sanctified, and washed, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. It was in Ephesus, where idolatry had its seat; it was in Rome, where luxury had introduced all its corruption, that the gospel, on its first entrance, became the power of God unto salvation, and turned men from idols to serve the true God, through Jesus Christ. It everywhere left attestations of the divine wisdom and goodness in which it had its origin, in the moral change which it produced in men of all nations, by communicating to their affections and desires a new and spiritual direction, by purifying their thoughts from the grossness and depravity in which they had been held, and by rendering the love of God and of man their ruling motives.

31. The change accomplished by the gospel on those who became its disciples from among the Jews, was not less illustrative of its mighty power. It was not from men who were remarkable for their contempt of other nations that we should have expected the greatest liberality of sentiment, and a benevolent zeal for the salvation of mankind, which no opposition could extinguish. But Christianity had so altered their views and feelings, that the same persons who had asked their Master to call for fire from heaven, were foremost in suffering obloquy and shame in carrying the tidings of peace to those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise. They overcame their national prejudices and peculiarities; considered themselves, in consequence of the



blessings of which they had been made partakers, debtors both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and unwise; and became all things to all men, that they might save some. To what influence less efficacious than the power of God can we reasonably ascribe this extraordinary alteration of character, this sudden elevation of aim, the unresisting meekness, humility, and affection, exhibited by the fishermen of Galilee, and by those of their nation who embraced the gospel? When we remember the pride, worldliness, and proscribing spirit natural to them as Jews, and see them unite in the bonds of holy fellowship with all who, in every place, became the followers of their Lord, are we not presented with the commencement of that extraordinary but delightful union, prefigured under the similitude of the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together?\*

32. When we reflect on what the gospel is, on what it authoritatively requires, and on the circumstances of those to whom it was addressed, we cannot account for its general reception without tracing it to the supernatural influence by which it was attended. Its doctrines were principles which, wherever they were embraced, produced an entire change of character. They were acted upon by myriads over the world; were received and relied upon as true and infinitely important; were adhered to, in defiance of opposition, during life, and triumphantly maintained in death. Yet the persons by whom the gospel was thus received and acted upon had to be persuaded by the teachers of the new religion, that the deities which they and their fathers had worshipped were no gods; that there is but one only living and true God, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe; that, for the purpose of delivering them from that wrath which they had incurred, and that punishment to which they were exposed, he had sent his only Son into the world to make atonement for their sins; and that all who trusted in him, and obeyed him, who denied themselves to all impurity, and who became willingly subject to his authority, would be accepted of God, and enjoy everlasting life.

33. The success of the apostles, then, in preaching the gospel, did not consist in inducing mankind to receive speculative opinions; or in merely "persuading a man who had maintained the extinction of the soul at the dissolution of the body, to

\* Isa. xi.

acquiesce in arguments for its immortality ; it was not to convince a disciple of Epicurus that the prospective contrivances and admirable adaptation of the several parts of the universe prove an intelligent contriver ; but it was to persuade those who had believed themselves subject to no law, except that of the State, to acknowledge a moral Governor ; to submit to a code of unusual strictness and purity ; to renounce sensual indulgences which they had been accustomed to consider innocent ; to give up habits of life which had been familiar to them from their youth, and adopt a new course on principles entirely different. This would not be done by whole bodies of men on a chance, or out of a rash love of novel doctrines. It was not the sort of new thing for which the sophists of Athens were always on the watch. It was what we cannot imagine any person to consent to do without some overruling motive, or without the strictest examination."

34. Yet, when we speak of the success of the gospel, we mean, that it was everywhere thus influential in inducing men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Its efficacy in producing these extraordinary results is a phenomenon which is admitted even by those who would fain account for it by the operation of secondary causes. Irrespectively of the New Testament, we have ample testimony furnished to the piety, purity, humility, and spirituality of the early Christians. "We," says Justin Martyr, "who formerly valued our estates and possessions above all things else, now put them into a common stock, and distribute to those that are in need. We, who formerly delighted in impurity, now observe the strictest chastity. We, who practised magical charms, now devote ourselves to the true God. We, who once hated each other, and delighted in mutual quarrel and bloodshed—and, according to custom, refused to sit at the same fire with those who were not of our own tribe and party—now, since the appearance of Christ in the world, live familiarly with them, pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us without a cause to direct their lives according to the excellent precepts of Christ ; that so they may have reasonable hope to obtain a share in our rewards from the great Lord and Judge of all things."

35. "Inquire," says Origen, "into the lives of some among us ; compare our former and our present course of life, and you will find in what impieties and impurities men were involved

before they embraced our doctrines. But, since they embraced them, how just, grave, moderate, and resolute are they become! Nay, some are so inflamed with the love of purity and holiness, as to abstain even from legitimate gratifications." "Give me," says Lactantius, "a man that is angry, furious, and passionate, and, with a few words from God, I will render him as meek and quiet as a lamb; give me one that has lived in vice and sensuality, and you shall see him sober, chaste, and temperate. So great is the power of divine wisdom, that, being infused into the breast, it will soon expel that folly which is the parent of all vice and wickedness." "Their serious and sequestered life," says a writer who had no inclination to exalt their character, "averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, economy, and all the sober and domestic virtues. As the greater number were of some trade or profession, it was incumbent on them, by the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions which the profane are too apt to conceive against the appearance of sanctity. The contempt of the world exercised them in habits of humility, meekness, and patience. Even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue. Ambitious to exalt the perfection of the gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, and of patience, to a height which it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption." \*

36. Here, then, we behold, produced by the gospel, a change in the religious sentiments, principles, and habits of mankind; a change which we know, from experience, it is most difficult to effect. We see myriads in different countries, who had been brought up in ignorance of God, and of a future state, renouncing their idols, giving to God the supremacy over their hearts and affections, and holding this world in subordination to the concerns of eternity. We see multitudes of persons who had lived in the indulgence of their passions, who had been totally unrestrained by any consideration of a holy and invisible God, conducting themselves and their pursuits as under his all-seeing eye. We observe them cultivating a moral and religious character, pure, humble, and useful, the pattern of which was to be found only in the gospel. Human nature was the same then as it is now; and experience will satisfy every one who attends

\* Gibbon.

to it, of the extreme difficulty of persuading even an individual to change his moral principles and habits. The difficulty of effecting such a change in a single instance, universally acknowledged as the lesson of experience, has given rise to the question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

37. If, however, this extreme difficulty be felt in a Christian country, and in the midst of many advantages, must it not have existed in a tenfold degree in the circumstances in which Christianity was originally promulgated? What hope of success, in human estimation, could the fishermen of Galilee entertain in any heathen city? Despised on account of their nation, the cause in which they had embarked required them, before they made a single convert, to assail the strongest prepossessions and passions of their audience; to denounce idols where no other worship than idolatry was known; to "proscribe the pleasures of this world in the midst of wealth, vanity, and luxury; to preach the care of the soul to those who denied its immortality; to inculcate the fear of God upon those who were ignorant of his existence, or, if they acknowledge a supreme Being, denied his moral government." This ministry was exercised, let it be remembered, in the midst of the most harassing persecution; and those who embraced the doctrines which it proclaimed, did so in the immediate prospect of losing their civil privileges and domestic enjoyment, with torments, chains, and death before them. Was it possible, in such circumstances, that even one individual should have been converted to Christianity, unless Christianity had been at once accompanied with evidence demonstrative of its divine origin, and with supernatural influence to change the character of man?

38. This argument is strengthened by recollecting the completeness of the change in question; a change which produces principles in man totally different from those which are natural to him. Without determining what is, or is not, the actual extent of human depravity, it is sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that man, in every situation, is corrupt; that he is influenced so uniformly by propensities which are selfish, sensual, and worldly, as to exhibit, in all circumstances, the character of a selfish, sensual, and worldly being. Christianity, on the contrary, presents to our view opposite principles, and a totally different character; and declares that these must be



produced in all those who shall inherit the kingdom of God. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of God is not in him." In place of seeking our own gratification in our actions and pursuits, we are to glorify God by our bodies and spirits which are his. In place of cherishing envy, or hatred, or revenge, we are to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them who spitefully use us, and persecute us. We are to do nothing through strife or vain-glory; but are to do everything from love to God, and in love to our fellow-creatures.

39. Christianity, then, exhibits principles of action which are opposed to the principles which are natural to man. A change must be produced in the very nature of man before these principles can be embraced so as to influence the whole character. But this change upon himself he obviously cannot effect; this can only be accomplished by the Omnipotence that gave him being. Had he been required merely to restrain existing principles, or to sacrifice some particular passion, the requisition might have been met, since one passion might have been employed to subdue another; but the character which he is to acquire is to proceed from a frame of heart so very different from that which is natural to him, that its production is styled in the New Testament a new birth, and a new creation. The conclusion, therefore, is, that in every single instance in which Christianity is successful in producing a compliance with its requirements, the change is accomplished by a supernatural influence.

40. This conclusion teaches us to consider the preservation of the gospel, no less than its rapid promulgation, a decisive evidence of its divine origin. The piety of the parents, according to this view, affords no certain proof of the piety of the children; and though a nation were converted in a day, unless the same spiritual change were accomplished on the succeeding generation, the profession of Christianity would be merely nominal, and irreligion would again prevail. The fact may be humiliating, but it is not the less true, that mankind have a tendency to degenerate, as is too well proved by the history of true religion in every age. Many of those portions of the earth in which the gospel, through the instrumentality of apostles, gained distinguished triumphs, and in which they planted

flourishing churches, are now in darkness, and covered with the shadow of death. Are there not many in our own land, who, while they profess to believe in the truth and divine authority of Christianity, oppose its spirit, and cherish principles and habits at variance with its requirements? They are convinced, but they are not reconciled; and there is a constant resistance to requirements which are felt to be disagreeable and irksome. Why should there be this discrepancy between the profession, and the heart and life, if there were not principles in the nature of man opposed to the heavenly religion of the Bible? Successfully, then, to promulgate this religion among mankind, and to maintain it from age to age, must be owing to the invisible operation of the mighty power of God. "A flame living on the very bosom of the deep," as an eloquent preacher has expressed it, "opposed by all the winds of heaven; often obscured, nearly extinguished, always resisted; yet rising from apparent exhaustion and decay into new brightness; enlarging the circle on which it shines age after age; and smiling on the elements which are battling against its existence, must be sustained by ethereal fires!"\*

41. This view of the opposition between Christianity and the corruption of human nature, furnishes an explanation of the reason why some of those who beheld the miracles which were wrought in confirmation of the divine authority of the gospel did not believe. They were predisposed to reject whatever evidence might be adduced in attestation of a religion which they really disliked; because opposed to their prejudices, interests, and principles. Under the influence of this hostile predisposition, the Jews ascribed the miracles which Jesus and his apostles performed to demoniacal power, and the pagans to magical operation. With regard to the Jews, there were several things which were calculated to strengthen this unfavourable bias of mind; and, consequently, to induce them to seek for an explanation of those mighty works, the reality of which they could not but acknowledge. To admit the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah, was to confess their guilt; to relinquish the hopes of national aggrandizement which they had fondly cherished; to sacrifice what they held dear to them in the present life; and completely to change their personal conduct in obedience to his requirements. They were therefore anxious to find some such solution of the miracles as would

\* Reed.

allow them to think they were at liberty to resist the demands of the new religion; people are easily satisfied when they are willing to be deceived; and a vague reference to the explanation alluded to, though quite as insufficient to an honest inquirer as the plea of witchcraft to an enlightened philosopher now, might be enough to divert attention, and resist the first weak impressions of conscientious conviction. While such hostile disposition remains, it is clear that no weight of evidence can effectually induce men to render the obedience of faith; they will not believe "though one should rise from the dead."

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### CHAPTER III.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL A PROOF OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN—GIBBON'S SECONDARY CAUSES.

1. WE have seen that Christianity succeeded under circumstances in which imposture must have been detected and crushed; and by an instrumentality totally inadequate to the effects produced. Some of its leading facts and doctrines were unfavourable to its reception, and rendered it to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The agents employed in its promulgation were Jews—poor, artless, illiterate, and, in human estimation, most unsuited for the promulgation of a new religion. The age in which it began to be diffused was that in which Rome had reached the zenith of its glory; when literature and philosophy were cultivated with great assiduity, and when a spirit of active inquiry on all subjects generally prevailed. The unparalleled sufferings and persecutions of the teachers and disciples of Christianity, which continued with little intermission during three hundred years, were sufficient to obstruct its progress, if indeed its progress could have been arrested by the power of man. To these circumstances, we have to add the contrariety, between the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, and the evil passions and propensities of human nature.

2. But, in opposition to the natural course of things, it prevailed widely over the world. A revolution so astonishing, accomplished by instruments so evidently weak and disproportioned, and under circumstances so adverse and unfavourable, teaches us to look to God as its author, whose weakness is stronger than man, and who can effect his mightiest purposes by means which, in human estimation, are utterly inadequate.

3. The enemies of Christianity, however, have attempted to trace its success to the operation of ordinary and natural causes. After what I have already advanced on this subject, it might be considered unnecessary for me to make any additional observations for the purpose of showing that all such causes are utterly inadequate to the production of the effects in question; especially as this has been done at length by different writers of distinguished talents. But though I conceive that I have proved the impossibility of the success of the gospel having been owing to any human means merely, it is proper that we should briefly notice what the adversaries of the Christian faith have alleged to the contrary.

4. It has been alleged, that the love of the marvellous, a principle of peculiar strength in the human mind, will go a great way to account for the early and general reception of the gospel. An analysis of this principle, and of the laws by which its operation is regulated, are sufficient to convince us of the contrary. The story of Christianity is indeed most wonderful; disclosing as it does, the incarnation, death, resurrection, and glorious ascension of the Redeemer; and were it a mere speculation, which made no demands on the obedience of those who received it, and which required them to make no sacrifice, its general reception would not appear so extraordinary. But the Christian teacher told his auditors, that belief in the truth of the message which he delivered was not a matter of indifference; that they were required to give credit to it as the wisdom of God; that they were to deny themselves to all that they held dear on earth; to hold themselves in readiness to part with the blessings and comforts which they possessed—with ease, fortune, and life. Would not the prepossession which the strangeness of the story is supposed to have created, be destroyed, and give way to what is a much stronger principle in human nature, and which much more keenly and uniformly interests mankind—anxiety for their happiness? There would be now a desire to reject the story; or, if they were satisfied that, before rejecting it, they ought in conscience to examine it, the most exact scrutiny would be set on foot, and nothing less than what was believed to be the most convincing evidence would establish their faith. However strong we may conceive the love of the marvellous to be as a principle in the human mind, it could not, in the countries where they taught, have been of much service to the apostles, because it was completely ratified



by the religion previously established, and to which so many other ties attached those whom they laboured to convert. The pagan theology abounded in wonders much more strikingly astonishing than anything contained in Christianity; prodigies were frequently resorted to, in the manner best calculated to interest the minds of the people, and to impress them with the most superstitious reverence and awe. Any effect, then, which may be ascribed to the love of the marvellous would, supposing them to have been in all other respects upon a footing, have been more in favour of the old religion than of the new; and when we take into account the real state of the case, that the people were zealous for their own faith, while Christianity, with much less of the wonderful, shocked all their prepossessions, there can be little hesitation in concluding, that it was not indebted to the love of wonder for its reception in the world.\*

5. I shall now briefly advert to the secondary causes to which the celebrated historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire attributes the progress and ultimate triumphs of the gospel. I shall only premise, in regard to secondary causes, that I am not to be understood as denying that such causes contributed to the diffusion of Christianity. On the contrary, might we not have expected that the God of providence, who is the author of Christianity, would render his dispensations subservient to the promulgation of the gospel of salvation? Nor can we doubt that, in point of fact, the ordinary course of his providence was so ordered as to co-operate with his gracious designs in making known to mankind the great plan of redeeming mercy? The question in dispute is, not whether ordinary causes contributed to the promulgation and success of Christianity—for that is not denied—but whether they of themselves were adequate to that event. We maintain that they were not, and that therefore the ultimate establishment of Christianity furnishes separate and independent evidence of the truth of divine revelation, though no prophecy should have been announced, and no miracle performed.

6. "Our curiosity," says Mr. Gibbon, "is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry an obvious and satisfactory answer may be returned, that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the

\* Cook on the Resurrection of Christ.

doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world—and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose—we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask not indeed what were the first, but what were the *secondary* causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church. It will perhaps appear, that it was most effectually favoured and assisted by the five following causes:—(1.) The inflexible, and, if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians; derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit, which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses. (2.) The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth. (3.) The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Church. (4.) The pure and austere morals of the Christians. (5.) The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing State in the heart of the Roman Empire. It was by the aid of these causes—exclusive zeal, the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of miracles, the practice of rigid virtue, and the constitution of the primitive Church—that Christianity spread itself with so much success in the Roman Empire. To the first of these the Christians were indebted for their invincible valour, which disdained to capitulate with the enemy whom they were resolved to vanquish. The three succeeding causes supplied their valour with the most formidable arms. The last of these causes united their courage, directed their arms, and gave their efforts that irresistible weight, which even a small band of well trained and desperate volunteers has so often possessed over an undisciplined multitude, ignorant of the subject, and careless of the event of war.”

7. There are three observations which obviously present themselves to every Christian reader of the passage which I have quoted.

8. (I.) That the attack on Christianity is altogether unbecoming the talents and learning of Mr. Gibbon. That his design is, under something like a pretence of respect for the Christian religion, insidiously to assail and subvert it, cannot

be doubted by any one. But surely this assassin-like mode of attack—this assumption of the mask of friendship for the purpose of making the wound to be inflicted more deadly—was base and contemptible in itself, and a way of disposing of the claims of Christianity indicative of the highest folly as well as depravity. For unless a religion which claims to be a revelation from God bears on its surface the palpable characters of imposture, is it not the duty of those to whom it is addressed to consider seriously the evidences which are furnished of its divine authority? The question involved in such consideration is infinitely momentous, and imperiously demands the candid attention of every man.

9. What is the character, what are the professed designs of the religion which is thus insidiously and contemptuously assailed? Are its pretensions to be a divine revelation so obviously unfounded that they may be treated with irony, and dismissed with sarcasm? The man who can act thus in regard to a religion which challenges the severest examination of the miraculous attestations of its having come from God—a religion which bears inherently impressed upon all its doctrines and precepts the evidences of its divine origin—a religion which is so admirably adapted to all the wants and weaknesses of mankind—and a religion whose claims have been fully admitted by men of the most profound understandings—the man who can act the insidious and cowardly part in regard to it of this historian, must sooner or later bring on himself the contempt with which he has vainly endeavoured to overload Christianity.

10. (II.) This historian's attack on the Christian religion is malignant. The causes which he states as accounting for the success of the gospel are so completely and designedly blended with falsehood, as to produce on the minds of the young and unwary the impression most unfavourable to Christianity and to the character of Christians. While he admits the zeal of the disciples of Jesus, he describes it as intolerant, and derived from the Jewish religion: thus insinuating, that its source was earthly, and not the conviction of the truth and infinite importance of Christianity. While the doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth, is numbered with secondary causes, the language employed by this historian in the statement of it, shows that he adduced it for

the purpose of throwing ridicule on the pretensions of the apostles to the gift of inspiration and prophecy. Thus, he tells us, that the apostles predicted the near approach of the end of the world; but that the revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation. He speaks of miraculous powers having been ascribed to the primitive church; and with the view of representing the doctrine of miracles in the most absurd light, and as beneath the notice of a philosopher, he says, that these consisted of divine inspirations, conveyed sometimes in the form of sleeping, sometimes of waking vision; and were liberally bestowed on all ranks of the faithful, on women as on elders, on boys as well as upon bishops. While he affects to acknowledge the virtues of the first Christians, as conducing to the spread of their religion, he turns the seeming compliment into an occasion of traducing Christians and their divine Master. The union of the Christian church is the last of the five secondary causes to which he refers the rapid and extensive spread of Christianity: but in illustrating this particular, the Christian church is entirely misrepresented and calumniated.

11. (III.) The causes which are here assigned for the spread of the Christian religion, were totally inadequate to the production of that event. The first of these, was the intolerant zeal of the Christians. That they were zealous and devoted in the service of Christ, and deemed it an honour to suffer shame for his sake, is undoubtedly true. They believed, on evidence which can never be impugned, that he is a divine Being, and a messenger sent from God—that all the doctrines which he taught, or authorized his servants to teach in his name, are infallible truth, and that the communication of them to men of all nations was a duty to which they were animated and called by love to Christ, obedience to his command, zeal for his glory, compassion for the miseries, and anxiety for the salvation, of mankind. Their zeal was of necessity uncompromising; and calculated to awaken hostility against them. The Jews, though they looked upon an image in their own country as an abomination, and would have died rather than suffer it to be erected there, made no efforts to draw away the heathen from their false gods. They only asked for toleration, and to be allowed to worship the God of their fathers unmolested. It was far otherwise with Christians who felt the obligation which the command



of their Lord imposed on them to make known the gospel to the whole race, and to proselytize and make disciples of all nations. They were not, and could not be satisfied, with enjoying the salvation of Christ themselves; they laboured incessantly to induce all others to embrace it also. Their religion admitted of no compromise, and prescribed the duty of denouncing the gods which the nations worshipped as vanities and lies, and all their religious rites as fooleries and abominations which they ought instantly to relinquish. Their success in a single instance presupposed that the convert to the Christian faith had become an apostate from the religion of his country.

12. But it is obvious that this ardent and uncompromising zeal must have awakened against the Christians the hostility of all ranks and of all nations. It was so far from being conducive to the rapid spread of the gospel, that its tendency was quite the reverse. It was the occasion of putting the whole Roman world in arms against it; and of kindling those fires of persecution which burned with such intense violence during the greater part of the first three centuries.

13. It is alleged that this continued persecution was the means of sustaining the zeal, and of increasing the numbers of the Christians. It has indeed been an often repeated maxim, and one that has generally been admitted without much consideration, that a cause derives advantage from persecution. But this maxim will hold true only in regard to a good cause; for though error and fanaticism may derive temporary benefit from persecution by transferring sympathy to the sufferers, and by fixing a wavering mind in its creed, it cannot, by this means, gain permanent triumph and establishment. The way to aid a bad cause is not to fix the scrutinising eyes of mankind upon it. Truth, on the other hand, may be retarded in its progress by opposition, but it will gain strength from the conflict, and ultimately rise to the position which it is entitled to hold. But to admit that Christianity derived advantage from persecution because of its truth, is to yield the point in controversy.

14. To affirm, then, that the intolerant zeal of the Christians was a cause of the success of Christianity, is really saying, that the mere circumstance of the Christian having refused to tolerate anything in the established religions, became the inducements for those very religions to tolerate the Christians.

15. The second of Mr. Gibbon's causes is the doctrine of a future life which Christianity promulgated. But this doctrine,

as brought to light by the gospel, is connected with the resurrection of the body, and the day of righteous judgment; it was associated with those terrors of the Lord which made Felix tremble, and which, so far from presenting an inducement to embrace the religion of Christ, contributed to make this religion be to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness. Has the immortality so clearly revealed in the gospel had sufficient efficacy as a motive to lead modern infidels to embrace the Christian faith? It had no power, it would seem, in persuading Mr. Gibbon to relinquish his scepticism.

16. With regard to the third cause assigned for the success of the gospel, "the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church," the very purpose for which Mr. Gibbon here adduces it, is to show how fully he disbelieves in the doctrine of miracles in relation to Christianity. The insinuation is, that the things called miracles by the early Christians were the sleight-of-hand performances of a few knavish impostors. The amount of this statement, therefore, on this head is, that the miraculous pretensions of impostors, and that too in the most enlightened age, and in circumstances of the greatest publicity, successfully contributed to the advancement of that cause which they were intended to promote.

17. The fourth cause to which he attributes the prevalence of Christianity is, the purity of Christian character, or, as he terms it, the pure and austere morals of the Christians. I have already noticed that this topic furnishes this historian with an occasion of slandering the teachers and disciples of Christianity. But apart from the calumnious misrepresentation with which it is connected, it supposes, what is palpably absurd, that the gospel was rendered acceptable to the impure, licentious, and idolatrous Gentiles by its pure and rigid morality.

18. But the unity and discipline of the primitive church are the fifth cause of the success of the gospel. Mr. Gibbon explains what he means by the unity and discipline of the Christian church by saying, that they consisted of faith and charity. But, as he himself afterwards admits that faith and charity were not likely to aid a cause in a world destitute of either, it is not necessary further to follow his statements.

19. Such are the arguments by which such a man as Gibbon seeks to invalidate the force of Christian evidence! So great is the weakness of the strongest mind when, through its own perversity, it attempts to make the worse appear the better reason!

We complain that, choosing to oppose the Christian religion, he should have done it with such sophistry, such malignity, such hypocrisy, such unaccountable levity. A man of any noble sentiments, or any correct views, if he were, by the force of wrong conviction, obliged to declare himself against the popular faith, would do it with concern and seriousness; for an individual to annihilate, as he thinks, the dearest hopes which ever visited the world, and sustained, at least, by the best evidence ever presented, and then to laugh and sneer in bitter meriment and scorn on the wretchedness and hopelessness he has created, is an unutterable outrage on all philosophy and on all humanity.

20. I conclude my observations on Gibbon in the words of Lord Brougham:—"There runs," says he, "a vein of sneering and unfair insinuation always against Christians and their faith through the whole both of those inquiries and other portions of ecclesiastical history, especially the religious transactions of Constantine; nay, through almost every part of the work in which any opportunity is afforded by the subject—any opportunity of gratifying a disposition eminently uncharitable, wholly unfair, and tinged with prejudices quite unworthy of a philosopher, and altogether alien to the character of an historian. Nor is the charge lessened, but rather aggravated, by the pretence constantly kept up of his being a believer, when any reader of the most ordinary sagacity at once discovers that he is an unrelenting enemy of the Christian name. Nothing can be more discreditable to the individual, nothing, above all, more unworthy the historian, than this subterfuge, resorted to for the purpose of escaping popular odium. All men of right feelings must allow that they would far more have respected an open adversary, who comes forward to the assault with a manly avowal of his disbelief, than they can a concealed, but bitter enemy, who assumes the garb of an ally, in order effectually to screen himself and injure the cause he pretends to defend."

21. To give instances of the unfairness which I have, in common with all Gibbon's readers, reproved, would be too easy not to prove superfluous. But the sixteenth chapter must for ever be, in an especial manner, a monument of his gross injustice or incurable prejudice. The eagerness with which he seizes on every circumstance to extenuate the dreadful persecutions that admit of no defence, is in the highest degree discreditable, both to his honesty and his sound judgment. He purposely

begins with Nero, and so leaves out the persecutions recorded in Scripture. His account of Cyprian's martyrdom is as unfair as it could be without deceit and positive falsehood, casting a veil over all the most horrible atrocities practised on that amiable and innocent personage, and magnifying into acts of clemency exercised towards him every insignificant attention that was paid him—perverting, too, the truth of history, in order to feign circumstances which really do not appear vouched by any kind of authority. But nothing can be more preposterous than the elaborate description which he gives of the comforts derived by the sufferers in these cruel scenes from the glory of martyrdom, and from the great preference which they must have given it over the disgrace of apostasy. The twofold object of this strange discourse is at once to lower the sufferer's merit and extenuate the oppressor's guilt. Nor is there any kind of persecution for conscience sake to which the same remarks are not equally applicable.

22. When, then, all the circumstances in which Christianity was originally diffused throughout the world are considered, no man whose mind is not blinded by inveterate prejudice, can suppose that any ordinary causes were adequate to its success. The facts on which it is founded rendered it repulsive to the Jews, and foolish and contemptible in the eyes of the Gentiles. There was nothing in the natural instruments employed in promulgating the gospel fitted to diminish the force of these serious hindrances to its reception: but on the contrary, as Jews who had no pretensions to literature, or wealth, or rank, or authority, men who were poor, unknown, and illiterate, they were likely to call forth insurmountable prejudices against the cause which they advocated. But in addition to these hindrances to the progress of the gospel, the Christians were persecuted with extreme and long-continued violence. The circumstances in which it was promulgated were such as to require every one who embraced it to hold himself in readiness to relinquish his reputation, his ease, his fortune, and his life, with no other prospect in this life than torture, and fetters, and death. It was therefore the immediate interest of all to oppose and suppress Christianity, but none had any interest in helping or in owning it.

23. Besides these formidable obstacles to the success of the Christian cause, there was another still more formidable, namely, that the bias and propensities of human nature were directly



opposed to the reception of the Christian religion. So great is the contrariety between the spirit and requirements of the Christian religion and the depraved nature of man, that in place of mankind eagerly embracing real Christianity, it is found in experience that there is a constant tendency to degeneracy and declension wherever it is professed. In proof of this we have only to contrast the present state of Christendom in regard to religion with the Christian religion as it is delineated in the pages of the New Testament. This religion has had always to struggle with superstition, infidelity, opinions and practices, opposed to her purity and authority. But notwithstanding this contrariety, the gospel mightily and everywhere prevailed. Though it had not one principle in common with the religions which then prevailed—though it was propagated by a few persons who were signally disqualified for the enterprise—though it was opposed from the very first, and everywhere spoken against—though it was hostile to human opinion, human prejudices, human interest, and even to the strongest passions and propensities of human nature—it was notwithstanding propagated with facility and rapidity over the whole earth, and procured disciples among all nations. The conclusion, then, is, that the religion of Christ was propagated, not by any ordinary causes merely, but by a supernatural influence and power which accompanied it, and that therefore the religion of Christ is truly divine.

24. I must not bring my observations on the rapid and successful promulgation of the gospel to a conclusion, without again adverting to the evidence which is thus furnished to prove that Christianity was accompanied by divine supernatural influence, and peculiarly under the protection of Providence. The mighty signs and wonders which were wrought in attestation of its heavenly origin, were sufficient to convince those who beheld them of its *truth*, and to induce them sincerely to embrace and profess it. But was sincerity alone a sufficient pledge for their maintaining the profession of their faith in defiance of such persecution as they appear to have endured? Or is it possible to account for such an innumerable body of men and women, of all ages, in all the various conditions of life, and of mental endowments equally varied, having submitted to the most exquisite and lingering torture, from which they might escape by abjuring the Christian name, without supposing that their resolution was immediately

upheld by preternatural divine influence? The representations which are given us of their suffering, considered in connexion with the incalculable number of victims, whose resolution and fortitude triumphed over all that the art of man could inflict, seem to forbid us to ascribe their conduct to anything that is in the mind of man, unsupported by that divine power, which can strengthen and enable him for all things. Notwithstanding the paramount importance of what awaits us hereafter, it is well known that the fear of death, or rather, of the torture that may be inflicted before death can relieve us, has overcome the resolution and fortitude of some men, who were not merely sincere in their Christian profession, but eminently distinguished by their strength of mind, as well as fortified by long experience of the power of religion. How, then, shall we account for an opposite result in circumstances far less favourable? How shall we account for the triumph of men who had no such advantages?—I say, men who had no such advantages; for out of the multitude of martyrs to the faith of Christ, there must have been many who were not remarkable for either native energy of mind, or any previous attainments which could fortify them in the hour of trial. Is it unreasonable—is it not, on the contrary, most natural—to regard their triumph as the effect of a divine interposition, and consequently, as affording separate and undeniable evidence, that the cause in which they suffered was the cause of God?

25. “The man who duly considers, what it seems impossible to deny, that the gospel of Christ, within the time to which I have referred, was accepted and embraced by the great body of mankind in all the nations of the civilized world; that it was promulgated in an enlightened age, and gradually recommended itself to the learned as well as unlearned of every class and condition; that the men employed in its propagation were, generally speaking, illiterate, but boldly appealed, for the truth of what they taught, to the evidence of miracles, wrought by them in the most public manner, and under the eye of those to whom they preached; that, so far from there being anything in its doctrine that could recommend it to a worldly mind, it inculcated many hard sayings, of which it was early complained that no man could bear them; that it notwithstanding laid claim, from the beginning, to universal acceptance, and virtually declared war against any other system of faith and worship which had prevailed among men; that

it thereby provoked the powers of the world to measures of the most determined hostility; that the early Christians were, in consequence, exposed to such persecution as had never before been exemplified, and yet maintained their Christian profession with such resolution and fortitude as we cannot reasonably ascribe to the human mind, otherwise than as strengthened and upheld by divine influence; that their triumph over the world, in the hour of their departure from it, not only defeated the purpose of their persecutors, but engaged others to embrace a religion which so clearly manifested itself to be of God; that in this way the doctrine of a crucified Saviour continued to gain ground, till even the rulers of the earth, who had so violently opposed it, were prevailed on, by the force of truth, to become its friends and abettors:—the man who can deliberately consider these things, without perceiving and acknowledging that the religion of Christ was an object of divine protection, that it was maintained and upheld by an interposition of divine power; or, without believing, in consequence, that the Author was sent of God, would not, I apprehend, have believed though he had been an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ from the state of the dead.”\*

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## CHAPTER IV.

MAHOMMED AND MAHOMMEDANISM—THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE SUCCESS OF A RELIGION BECOMES A PROOF OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN: SECONDARY CAUSES INADEQUATE.

1. THE gospel, when first promulgated, rapidly and almost universally prevailed; and its success is regarded as a proof of its divine origin.

2. It is conceded, however, that the mere prevalence of a religion furnishes no infallible test of its divine authority. For though we are warranted to conclude from the character and attributes of God that he will not, by miraculous interposition, attest doctrines as true which are in themselves false, or support the claims of pretenders to a divine mission when such claims are not founded in truth, we have no reason to think that he will invariably interfere for the prevention of the progress of error and delusion. He may allow those who have pleasure in unrighteousness, and who exercise not the faculties

\* Vindication of Christian Faith, by Dr. Inglis, pp. 284—289.—An admirable work.

with which they are endued for the purpose of distinguishing truth from falsehood, to be misled by deceivers; and thus a system of the most pernicious error may become widely prevalent. The righteous Ruler of the universe may permit the success of such a system for the punishment of those who love darkness rather than light. Success, therefore, is not an unequivocal proof of the divine origin of any doctrine or scheme of religion.

3. These suggestions of reason coincide with fact. Error and false religion have been permitted to prevail to a great extent over the world. Mahommed, the Arabian impostor, gave rise, in the seventh century, to the religious system which bears his name, and succeeded in inducing a large proportion of mankind to embrace it. It has continued, during eleven hundred years, to command the religious belief of the numerous followers of the pretended prophet of Mecca. When we behold a man born to all the obscurity of private life, suddenly raising himself to power the most absolute, and uniting the jarring opinions and hostile tribes of his countrymen in one common faith and government, under himself; when we behold a people, before almost wholly unknown and unheard of in the annals of history, rushing with unparalleled rapidity to empire and to glory, and establishing at once a new religion and a new government over a large portion of the habitable world; doubtless, our astonishment is excited at such unexpected and interesting events. But that which is singular and uncommon is not, therefore, to be deemed miraculous. Revolutions, however stupendous, which may yet lie within the compass of the human mind, when assisted by external events to effect, must not rashly and indiscriminately be imputed to the particular and immediate agency of God. Success alone affords no absolute proof of the favour of the Deity,—no determinate and appropriate evidence for the truth or divine original of any doctrines or opinions. It is only in particular situations, and under peculiar circumstances, that the argument drawn from success can be allowed to possess any weight; in situations where no human strength or genius could of itself have prevailed,—under circumstances where imposture could never have supported itself.

4. In order, therefore, to present the argument derived from the success of the gospel in its true light, we must contrast the character of Christ with that of Mahommed; Christianity with



Mahommedanism; and the circumstances in which the former was successful, with those in which the latter prevailed. A few observations on the first two of these particulars will enable us to enter with advantage on the discussion of the last.

5. Allow me to present to the view of my readers, then, the false prophet of the East yielding in retirement to the impure passions of human nature, and placing himself in public at the head of an army, to promulgate by the sword the tenets of a dark and debasing imposture; and then to conduct them to Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of the people; whose life was not only full of beneficence, but of holiness; whose private hours were occupied with acts of unostentatious devotion; who came from heaven not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; whose object it was, not to be a temporal prince, but a spiritual and compassionate Saviour; who rose, even while surrounded by sinful men, above the sinful infirmities of that nature of which he made himself partaker; who has left, for the imitation of his followers, a spotless example of charity, and goodness, and righteousness; who, with the possession of a power that made every element and every being subservient to his designs, exercised the most gentle virtues towards his enemies; who, on the cross, while suffering as the victim between the sinner and his God, presented, with the incense of his own merits, an imploring petition to heaven on their behalf; and whom all nature, as well as the Roman centurion, acknowledged to be truly the Son of God.

6. It is not necessary to suppose that Mahommed was either a monster of ignorance and vice, or destitute of talents. He could not have devised the scheme, nor successfully have accomplished it, of subverting the religion and government of his country, and establishing in their place a system of his own, had he been the despicable and imbecile personage which he has sometimes been represented. He was born in an uncivilized country, and in obscure and indigent circumstances. Though he enjoyed not, during the earlier years of his life, the advantages of a liberal education, he was favoured, at a more advanced age, with the best opportunities of obtaining the knowledge of men and manners; a species of knowledge which he turned to account in the prosecution of his subsequent designs. The inhabitants of Mecca, the place of his birth, carried on a constant and extensive commercial intercourse

with Persia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. In these employments the impostor was early initiated; and during his travels into the neighbouring nations, acquired that knowledge which enabled him to execute his daring and ambitious designs.

7. After he had lived several years in a lonely cave, in the recesses of Mount Hara, and had established in the minds of his neighbours a belief in his superior sanctity, he began, in his fortieth year, to assert his divine mission. He accommodated his system to the preconceived but discordant opinions of Jews, Christians, and idolaters; and, in order to conciliate the favour of the two former classes, he admitted the prophetic character of Moses, and that of Jesus Christ. With the same view, he freely borrowed from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments whatever he thought suited to his purpose; mingled the doctrines and precepts which he derived from this sacred source with Arabian fables; while he authorized the practice of idolatrous rites, and the indulgence of certain vices. The Koran, therefore, may with truth be characterised as an artful, motley mixture, made up of the shreds of different opinions, without order or consistency, full of repetitions and absurdities, yet presenting to every one something agreeable to his prejudices, expressed in the captivating language of the country, and often adorned with the graces of poetry. The artifice and elegance with which its discordant materials were combined so far surpassed the inexperience and rudeness of his countrymen, that they gave credit to the declaration of Mahommed, who said it was delivered to him by the angel Gabriel.

8. The impostor having made but few converts, at length commenced his military career, and alleged the divine command as his authority for so doing. His address, talents, and successes, increased the number of his followers, and emboldened him to engage in the extended and systematical operations of the warrior. While the flame of fanaticism, which he himself had kindled, burned furiously in every breast around him, he alone, cool and deliberate in the midst of slaughter and confusion, marked every movement of the enemy, took advantage of every error, and left no artifice unemployed to obtain and to secure the victory. When mild and gentle measures seemed best calculated to conciliate the affections of those whom despair might render formidable, we behold him, with an air of affected generosity, dismissing thousands of his captives. When

acts of severity appeared expedient, to intimidate the obstinate, we behold him basely taking vengeance on the fallen, and with every circumstance of deliberate and savage barbarity, imbruing his hands in the blood of the conquered.

9. Hitherto, every passion was rendered subordinate to the interests of ambition. But now Mahommed is presented to our view not only as a ruthless conqueror, but as the slave of sensual indulgence; the hapless females whom war made his captives, doomed to a fate more dishonourable than their slaughtered friends, brothers, or parents, were sacrificed to his lust. Indeed, ambition and lust were the passions which had the ascendancy over him, to the influence of which, either separately or combined, we may trace every action of his life. Hence originated the system of imposture which his genius devised; and hence we observe each subordinate part, throughout its whole contexture, pointing immediately or ultimately to the gratification of one or both of these predominant passions. His prophetic reputation being established, he rushed from an affectation of exemplary purity of manners into the most public and criminal excesses of sensual indulgence. Though the laws which he prescribed for the regulation of the carnal appetites were loose in the extreme, and designed by their looseness to captivate his countrymen, the boundless lust of Mahommed disdained to be confined even within the extensive limits which he had drawn for his followers. The authority of the God of purity was adduced to sanction the grossest immoralities committed by the man who had the audacity to pretend to be his prophet. The most abandoned libertine would blush at the particular representation of the horrid and disgusting scenes which unfold themselves to our view in the chamber of this impostor. It is therefore sufficient to observe, in general, that the retirements of Mahommed, from his first acquisition of power to his last decline of life, were continually disgraced by every excessive indulgence of that passion which has a more particular tendency to degrade the dignity of the human character even below the brute creation.

10. Let us now turn our attention to the character of our Lord and Saviour, and briefly contemplate the perfect virtues and numerous excellences by which, during his whole life, he was adorned. Without entering here into the minuteness of detail, it is sufficient for our present purpose to advert to those general features of his character by which his sincerity, purity, and exalted benevolence are proved.

11. If we recal to our recollection the prejudices of the Jews, and their expectations of a temporal prince, we must be satisfied that the circumstances in which our Lord appeared were calculated, in a very high degree, to render him unpopular. He presented himself to his countrymen in a character totally different from that in which they expected the Messiah to appear. While they looked for deliverance from the Roman yoke, he invited them to partake in a redemption from the slavery of sin and the dominion of death. Had he been influenced by interest or ambition, he would not have opposed the deep-rooted prejudices of the Jews, the pride of princes, and the superstition of the people. According to the acknowledgment of his enemies, he was true, and taught the way of God in truth, neither cared he for any man; for he regarded not the persons of men. He engaged not in the pursuit of secular power, declaring that his kingdom was not of this world; and when the multitude would have owned him for their king, he declined their proffers, and withdrew into retirement. Thus did he verify, by his relinquishment of worldly honour, wealth, and pleasure, by the humbleness of his appearance, the description of the prophet Isaiah: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."\* How remarkable is this humility; and what a contrast does it present to the ambition of the Arabian impostor, who seized the sceptre before it was offered to him!

12. The life of Christ has none of those inequalities which it is the delight of the orator to paint, and of the philosopher to analyse. The natural and unaffected deportment which he invariably preserved, without painful exertion, and without insidious design; the consistence between each particular action and each particular situation; the conformity of all his actions to one common rule—the word of God; and their tendency to one common end—the salvation of mankind; may be explored by the profound moralist, must be admired by the pious believer, but cannot be described, surely, without a portion of that matchless simplicity, with which they are recorded by the inspired evangelists. Too plain for ornament, and too grand for illustration, the character of Jesus leaves at a distance the power of language. Surrounded with the meanest circum-

\* Isa. xlii. 2; liii. 1—3.



stances, and, at the same time, distinguished by the most important and astonishing events, it seems to baffle equally by its humility and its majesty all the feeble efforts of human eloquence.

13. Jesus began his ministry by calling mankind to repentance, by assuring his hearers, that if any man would come after him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow him; but Mahommed, from the commencement of his career, allured his auditors by the hopes of conquest, by the glories of a visible monarchy, and the wealth and grandeur of earthly dominion. He is presented to our view as a military conqueror, who achieved victories, not by the force of truth, but by the strength of his sword; whose progress was accompanied with misery and blood, and followed by lamentation, and mourning, and woe.

14. Mahommed, therefore, cannot be compared with Jesus, because he cannot be considered as a teacher of piety and virtue, whose success was owing to the efficacy of his example and doctrine. He must be classed with military conquerors; distinguished from them only by calling religion to his aid, and by rendering it subservient to the advancement and establishment of his ambitious designs. The means by which he gained his triumphs were all human; and splendid as these triumphs were, it is obvious that human causes were perfectly adequate to their production.

15. But no such causes will account for the success of Christianity. The character of its Author, the nature of his religion, and its rapid promulgation, are all divine; they are, therefore, perfectly accordant with each other, and are alike to be viewed as the effect of supernatural influence. While every circumstance of the times, every particular in the manner and situation of mankind, concurred to favour the success of Mahomedan imposture, Christianity laboured under every disadvantage, and its success, by mere human agency, was morally impossible. Mahomedanism was proposed to a people rude and ignorant, in an age when universal darkness and barbarism had prepared mankind to receive, without discrimination, whatever tenets the artful and designing imposed on their credulity; but the period in which the gospel began to be preached was distinguished above all others for curious speculation and philosophical research. It was when Rome was in the zenith of its glory, when the arts and sciences were widely

cultivated, that the religion of the Cross arose, invited the severest scrutiny, and, notwithstanding the most formidable opposition, succeeded in subverting the systems of idolatry, in dispelling the gross darkness which had rested on the people, and in pouring heavenly light and blessedness on the world. While the Arabian impostor artfully accommodated his religion to the ruling passions, the favourite opinions, and the inveterate prejudices of mankind, the doctrine taught by the Redeemer enjoined the strictest self-denial, and opposed the opinions, prejudices, and propensities of those to whom it was addressed. While the pride of the Arabians pleaded powerfully in support of the claims of their pretended prophet, the national pride of the Jews armed them against the Saviour, and led them to give every opposition to the doctrine of his cross. They could not embrace the gospel without relinquishing every hope which ambition, as well as the views which they entertained of prophecy, had inspired; nor was it surprising that they regarded with indignation the progress of a religion which tended to deprive them of their peculiar privileges and distinctions, and to reduce them from that haughty pre-eminence which they had hitherto claimed, to the same level with the surrounding nations, whom they had been accustomed to regard with contemptuous scorn.

16. Mahommed formed his system of religion to suit the prevailing opinions, modes of worship, and inclinations of the people to whom it was first addressed; but Christianity was opposed not only to the pride of the Jews, it was also at variance with the wisdom of the philosopher, with the pompous ritual of paganism, and with all those powerful passions to which paganism, in all its forms, had given ample indulgence. Mahommedanism was imposed on the nations by the sword; Christianity succeeded not merely without human advantages, but in opposition to all human power, and in the midst of continuous persecution. The success of the one can only be accounted for by the supposition of miraculous interposition; that of the other was owing to the operation of ordinary causes, and was no more wonderful than the triumphant career of any other military adventurer.

17. Some of the causes of the original success of Mahommedanism may be clearly traced in the political and religious state of Arabia; in the independence and want of union among its tribes; in the gross ignorance of its barbarous and uncivil-

ized inhabitants; in the divisions and corruptions of the Christian Church; and in the nature and genius of Mahomedanism itself; in the fascinating allurements of its promised rewards, in their agreeableness to the propensities of corrupt nature in general, and to those of the inhabitants of warmer climates in particular; in the artful accommodation of its doctrines and its rites to the preconceived opinions, the favourite passions, and the deep-rooted prejudices of those to whom it was addressed; in the poetic elegance with which its doctrines, its precepts, and its histories were adorned; and in the captivating manner in which they were delivered. Such, then, being the circumstances, and such the means by which the religion of Mahommed was so widely diffused and so firmly established in the world, its success is capable of being accounted for by mere human causes.

18. We find, in accordance with these views, that while Christianity professed to be supported by an extraordinary interposition of the Deity, Mahommed did not pretend to work miracles in attestation of the truth of his doctrines. He, indeed, alleged the excellency of the Koran as a proof of its divine authority, and maintained that the elegance of its composition furnishes sufficient evidence of its heavenly origin. When called upon by his countrymen to produce proofs of his mission, and to work some miracle in attestation of his title to the prophetic office—in the evasive language of imposture, he shrunk from the just and pertinent requisition, and, with a tone of affected dignity, referred them to the supernatural elegance and sublimity of the Koran. But the necessity of a divine interposition for such an end will not be perceived by any person of taste and judgment, who recollects that the author of the Koran had in his possession the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. If we pass from the composition to the contents of the book, we shall soon come to the conclusion, that, so far from affording indication of miraculous interposition, it is a gross and palpable imposture. By attempting to explain what is inconceivable, to describe what is ineffable, and to materialize what in itself is spiritual, he absurdly and impiously aimed to sensualize the purity of the divine essence. He thus fabricated an incoherent system, a religion of depravity, totally repugnant, indeed, to the nature of that Being who is infinitely perfect; but more likely, on that account, to accord with the appetites and conceptions of a corrupt

and sensual age. Many persons, as Archbishop Sumner observes, understand Mahommedanism merely as a successful imposture, which has covered a wider surface than even Christianity; and this operates to injure Christianity, by familiarising us to an idea of successful imposture. But if the Koran were consulted, the imposture would become a powerful auxiliary to the truth.

19. The Koran contains its own refutation. For, while it acknowledges the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, it is in fact a gross corruption and perversion of both. It is impossible, therefore, upon its own showing, that it can have proceeded from the God of truth.

20. This is demonstrably certain, when it is considered that the Koran contains facts or doctrines contrary to those which have been already revealed, and those the divine authority of which it admits. Without entering at present into the full consideration of this subject, it is sufficient to remark that it denies the most important event in the history of the gospel—the death of Jesus Christ on the cross; which contradiction fully proves the Koran to be an impudent imposture.

21. This is, indeed, abundantly manifest in the effects which have resulted from it. When any religion is, as it were, incorporated with the ordinary providence of God in his moral government, the credibility of it may, in a great measure, be determined by its actual and visible influence on the welfare of mankind. The being whom it is the object of God's gracious will to bless in a future existence, it seems not consistent with his wisdom to oppress or deceive in the present. Much, therefore, would those doctrines want of their best evidence, which, while they pretended to minister to the future welfare of mankind, were instrumental now only in their degradation or their ruin.

22. But what has Mahommedanism done in promoting the temporal happiness of mankind? The fruits which have invariably resulted from it are only such as artful imposture would produce. These are visible in the condition of those countries, interesting from sacred and classic associations, the inhabitants of which have, for many ages, been semi-barbarous. It is humiliating to the pride of human intellect, that the most comprehensive moral change that ever was effected by a mere man in the character of an immense proportion of the species, was the work of a barbarian, unacquainted with the literature



and science of his own Arabia, as scanty at that time as the herbage in its deserts; and it is yet more derogatory to the vaunted pretensions of human virtue, unaided by a really divine influence, that this moral change was itself the greatest moral evil, from one source, with which our race has been visited since the serpent beguiled Eve with his subtlety. The Koran contains the oracles of this anomalous heresy—anomalous, yet so admirably adapted to all the fierce and licentious passions of our nature, that it required no miracle to aid the sword in its promulgation—finding or making a traitor in every evil heart which it assailed. Mahommed and his immediate successors were brutal, remorseless, fanatical conquerors, ravagers and overthrowers of nations and letters. In the reign of Omar, the third of this ferocious line, the celebrated Alexandrian library was condemned to be burned, on the shrewd assumption that if the books were in consonance with the Koran, they were useless, and if contrary to it heretical.\*

23. I shall conclude these observations on Mahommed in the words of the profound Pascal:—"Mahommed established his religion by killing others; Jesus Christ, by making his followers lay down their own lives; Mahommed by forbidding his law to be read; Jesus Christ by commanding us to read. In a word, the two were so opposite, that if Mahommed took the way, in all human probability, to succeed, Jesus Christ took the way, humanly speaking, to be disappointed. And hence, instead of concluding that because Mahommed succeeded, Jesus might in like manner have succeeded, we ought to infer, that, since Mahommed has succeeded, Christianity must have inevitably perished, if it had not been supported by a power altogether divine."

24. Unsuccessful attempts have been made, more especially by Mr. Gibbon, to account for the rapid diffusion of the gospel by the operation of secondary causes. We do not deny that such causes may have contributed to the progress of Christianity. On the supposition that Christianity is a revelation from God, might we not expect that the God of providence would render the government of the world subservient to the advancement of his own truth? The question is, not whether ordinary or secondary causes may have in some measure contributed to the success of Christianity, but whether they alone were adequate to the accomplishment of that event. We maintain, and

\* Montgomery's Lectures on Poetry, p. 348.

we have shown reasons for our opinion, that they were not; and that, therefore, the prevalence of Christianity furnishes separate and independent evidence of its truth and divine authority. The man who considers all the facts connected with its promulgation, who believes that "the doctrine of a crucified Saviour continued to gain ground, till even the rulers of the earth, who had so violently opposed it, were prevailed on, by the force of truth, to become its friends and abettors; the man who can deliberately consider these things without perceiving and acknowledging that the religion of Christ was an object of divine protection—that it was maintained and upheld by an interposition of divine power, or without believing, in consequence, that the author was sent from God—would not, I apprehend, have believed though he had been an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ from the state of the dead."\*

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## CHAPTER V.

THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIVIDUALS: IN NATIONS—THE FULNESS OF THE EVIDENCES FOR CHRISTIANITY—CHRISTIANITY COMMENSURATE WITH THE PROGRESSIVE ADVANCEMENT OF THE HUMAN RACE—THE IMPREGNABLE STRENGTH OF THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE.

1. WE are entitled to judge of any system of doctrines by the effects which it produces. A religion which is from God, and which is intended to fit man for the happiness of eternity, must have a meliorating influence on his character and condition in the present state. We are directed by the Author of Christianity to form our opinion according to this rule; "By their fruits ye shall know them." A system may possess much beauty and plausibility in theory, while its inefficiency only becomes palpable when we attempt to reduce it to practice. The philosopher may charm his audience with his speculations on the loveliness of virtue, and on its advantages both to individuals and to society, and yet his disquisitions may have no more effect in mending the heart, or in accomplishing the slightest melioration on the community, than the loveliness of a song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.

2. The mighty change which the gospel effected on those who became its disciples from among the Jews, when it was first preached, was illustrative of its great power. So great

\* Vindication of the Christian Faith, by Dr. Inglis, pp. 284—289.

was the change which it produced on their views and feelings, that the same persons who asked their Master to call for fire from heaven, were foremost in suffering obloquy and shame in carrying the tidings of salvation, not to their own kinsmen only, but to those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise. To what influence less efficient than the mighty power of God can we ascribe this extraordinary change of character, this elevation of aim, this unresisting meekness, this heavenly benevolence, manifested by the fishermen of Galilee, and by those who were associated with them in proclaiming the gospel?

3. The early disciples of Christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, fully acted in the belief of the truth and divine authority of the doctrines of the gospel. Before they would give credit, in their circumstances, to doctrines which, so far from ministering to the pride of men, required the exercise of humility and self-mortification, and to facts which seemed to reflect ignominy on the Author and the Finisher of their faith, they would examine well the grounds on which they were constrained, notwithstanding, to regard them as faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance. While we believe that a divine agency accompanied the doctrines of the cross, to render them mighty for the subduing of the thoughts of men to the obedience of Christ, we are persuaded that the conversion of such persons, in such circumstances, could not have taken place without a previous investigation of the evidences which attest the authority of the new dispensation; and that their having actually put their seal to the sufficiency of this evidence, and given the unequivocal pledge of their sincerity by their sufferings and martyrdom, will remain an auxiliary and corroborative proof that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

4. The early disciples were distinguished by their love to the Saviour. Though naturally separated from each other by the diversity of rank, and kindred, and colour, he ruled over their affections, and was to them all and in all; and, rather than allow themselves to be separated from the love of Christ, they submitted to tribulation and distress, persecution and famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword. They acted as if they constantly felt themselves under a debt of gratitude, the magnitude of which no labours or sufferings could ever express; as if the consideration of his abasement on the cross, and prevailing intercession in heaven, presented an irresistible claim to

undeviating devotedness to his cause; and the influence of his name awakened similar emotions in the hearts of all the multitudes of his disciples, leading their minds to the contemplation of his unsearchable riches, and becoming still more dear to them from the pain and shame which they had endured in its profession, and from its having been the tie which visibly united them in their tribulations with the Man of sorrows.

5. The early disciples of Christianity were distinguished by their moral purity and excellence. The morality of the New Testament, so pure and comprehensive, was embodied in their lives; they were self-denied in regard to themselves, and just and kind towards others; and their habitual aim was to do the things that are true, and honest, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. Though many of them had been stained with the vices of paganism, and though all of them had been the children of disobedience, they became fruitful in every good work. Wherever there was a church gathered from the heathen, there was an inroad made on the kingdom of sin and darkness, and a temple of purity was erected, from which all were secluded who refused compliance with the precepts of the gospel.

6. That Christianity produced these effects in early times, we are warranted to believe from the fact, that it has continued to produce similar effects to the present day. It may have been obstructed in its course by human policy, and the actual good which it has accomplished, compared with the vast benefits which it was capable of communicating, be small; but, notwithstanding the opposition with which it has had to struggle, and the corruption it has had to overcome, it has never wanted its faithful disciples, who imbibed the Spirit, and copied the example, and obeyed the precepts of their Lord. Who would compare heathen nations, in their moral practices, with the people who profess Christianity? Though there be many among the latter whose religion is only nominal, they are so far influenced by public opinion and the conduct of others, as to possess an external decency of character unknown in the lands that are darkened by the shadow of death.

7. The early Christians were distinguished by the warmth and spirituality of their devotion. This is a remarkable feature in the character of Christ, and it was imitated by all those who embraced Christianity. Occurrences which others would term ordinary, they made the subject of thankful acknowledgment, or of earnest prayer. A religion which requires its dis-



ciples to walk by faith, and not by sight; which impressively presents to their view the grace and compassion of Him who bore their infirmities and carried their sorrows; a religion which is opposed to worldly-mindedness, which denounces impurity, which refines and exalts every affection; a religion which connects God with every object and with every blessing, which makes his glory its chief end, and constitutes the Saviour the medium through whom, and by whom, and for whom are all things, is evidently fitted to produce the feeling of habitual and spiritual devotion.

8. Real Christians have always been distinguished by their superior happiness in life, and their tranquillity and hope in death. We learn from the New Testament, that the reception of the gospel was uniformly accompanied with happiness. Indeed, Christianity is fitted and intended to communicate peace and joy to all who truly receive it. But the contrast between the deaths of its genuine disciples, and those connected with infidelity, is as great as that which exists in regard to the piety, purity, and moral excellence of their lives. From the proto-martyr Stephen, downwards to the present hour, have many thousand Christians, in successive generations, rejoiced in the immediate prospect of dissolution, in hope of the glory of God. If in some instances, they have been disquieted in these solemn circumstances, the cause of their disquietude has not been Christianity, but the fear that they were not genuine Christians. It often happens, however, that dying Christians are filled with joy and triumph, and that they leave the world thanking God who giveth them the victory through Jesus Christ. Paul, in the near view of martyrdom, exclaimed, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." \* And of the millions who derived tranquillity and hope from the gospel in the hour of death, I shall only refer to one in modern times, Bishop Bedell, who addressed his family in these words: "Knowing that I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, I know also that I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Therefore, to me to live is Christ, and

\* 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

to die is gain, which increases my desire, even now, to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, through the all-sufficient merits of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer."

9. The power that produced the transformations in the lives of men, and that gave them and continues to give them peace and joy in death, must be divine. Christianity effects a complete change in the views, principles, and characters of those who embrace it; and looking to the visible manifestation of its transforming, purifying, and consoling power, in the lives of its disciples, are we not authorized to conclude that this power is from God? These effects have always resulted from Christianity, and from Christianity alone. It produces them in the nineteenth century, as it did in the first; multitudes by its power, *now* as well as then, have relinquished idolatry, and the impure and cruel rites to which they were addicted, and have been changed into humble, holy, and self-denied followers of Christ. In how many instances is this mighty change effected at so early a period of life, or in so gradual a manner, as to elude observation! Its reality is evinced by the fruits which follow from it. It is essentially the same in every age, and in every part of the world. This great change, produced only by the gospel of Christ, shows itself in all climates, and in all circumstances, by the same characteristic features; insomuch, that a genuine convert to Christ in Asia will find, should he come to this country, among genuine Christians, his own feelings, and tastes, and sympathies. Whatever be the cause of these universally similar effects, it must be the same cause universally—the same in every age and country. The cause of the admirable fruits referred to is undoubtedly Christianity, and it thus proves itself to be from God.

10. In order fully to estimate these effects, we must advert to the influence of Christianity on society, and on national improvement and happiness. The effects of Christianity, as a vital and saving power, soon became visible in those heathen lands in which it was first exerted, in turning multitudes of ignorant and superstitious pagans from idols, to the worship and service of the true God. The Christian churches, consisting of persons thus made new creatures in Christ Jesus, shone as lights in the world, in contrast with whom heathenism stood forth in all its deformity. The mark of Christian discipleship—that by which the followers of Jesus were known in the

world, was their love to one another; a circumstance by which the early Christians were remarkably characterised, and which did not fail to attract the attention, and gain the admiration of the heathen. However diversified were their circumstances—however much they differed from each other as to nation, rank, and education—they all felt towards each other as brethren, and gave one another all the support befitting so close a relation. The poor, the sick, widows and orphans, and those who were imprisoned for the truth's sake, were maintained by the whole Christian community. This brotherly love was also shown in the kindness which was cherished and exercised by the churches towards each other. The deepest sympathy was felt by every church with the sufferings or the prosperity of all the churches which constituted the Christian commonwealth. This benevolence, which sprung from heartfelt love to the Redeemer, was extended to the heathen around them, and was shown in unwearied efforts to promote their temporal and spiritual well-being.

11. It was impossible that a religion which produced these effects, which constituted all its disciples instruments of immediate good to those around them, should not have had a mighty influence in meliorating the present condition of mankind. Without directly interfering with existing institutions, it communicated vital principles to those who truly received it, which could not fail, in their operation, to carry improvement into all the arrangements and economy of human society. Without producing violent and convulsive changes in external things, it made effectual provision for reforming and amending them, by infusing the leaven which was designed gradually to leaven the whole lump. There might indeed, in some instances, be difficulty felt in the application of the great principles of Christianity; the line of demarcation between things indifferent, and things which are instantly to be resisted, might not, in every case, be perfectly apparent, or be seen in precisely the same light by all; but it is certain, that in proportion as the Christian religion influenced the human mind, were the means put into operation of effecting a mighty improvement on the whole framework of civil society. This improvement, accordingly, though often retarded by adverse circumstances, has been advancing, and will continue to accompany the progress of Christianity over the globe. There was one cruel and disgusting species of amusement, from which all who became Christians instantly withdrew—I refer to the sanguinary

shows of gladiators, the existence of which, among a people pretending to be civilized, affords melancholy proof how completely the best feelings of humanity may be subdued. Lawgivers, statesmen, philosophers, and even ladies of distinction, were eager to witness these revolting spectacles. But when Christianity, the religion of love, took possession of the heart—when the multitudes who became subject to its saving influence were taught to regard every fellow-creature as an heir of immortality, whose good, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, they were bound to promote—the combats of gladiators were viewed as alike cruel and criminal, and were shunned with horror.

12. There was one monstrous system of iniquity which prevailed over the world, by which all the laws of justice and humanity were violated and outraged; a system by which the selfishness of the natural man was unfolded in all its unfeeling insensibility, in all its grasping avariciousness; a system which attempted to divest man of that divine image with which he was created, by reducing him to a level with those animals which are incapable alike of religion and of responsibility. This system was slavery; it was everywhere firmly established; and in many places, too, under the sanction of the professed friends of freedom, who robbed a large portion of their fellow-men of what they themselves regarded as the greatest blessing—of those rights, for the possession of which, with respect to themselves, they were so jealous and anxious. Theirs was the inconsistency of proclaiming their hatred to all tyranny and despotism, while, at the same time, they were contented to dwell in the midst of many thousands of their fellow-creatures whom they themselves had deprived of the dearest rights of human beings. The liberty for which they were so zealous was not the liberty which ought to be the common possession, as it is the right, of all men, but merely that of a limited number of the inhabitants—a privileged class, who monopolized the immunities and distinctions of citizens. All others were treated not as men, but as things on whom, however innocent, the greatest tortures might be exercised, and one hundred of whom, if their master happened to be murdered, though they had no participation in the crime, were executed with the murderer.

13. It was while this system of oppression was established over the world, that Christianity was promulgated—Chris-



tianity, which taught that God is the common Parent of all mankind—that all men are on a footing of equality in the sight of God—that the natural and original rights of mankind are the same in regard to all—that all are alike the objects of God's providential kindness and care—that all are accountable to the supreme Governor and Judge—and that all are alike invited to partake in the blessings of redemption. The general reception of a religion which taught that masters and slaves had rights in common, that they were alike sinful in the eyes of their Maker, and equally required redemption through the blood of Christ, must necessarily have led to an entire change in the circumstances of society. Accordingly, wherever Christianity was truly received, masters and servants became brethren in Christ Jesus, partakers of the same heavenly influence, invested with the same privileges, and heirs together of the same happy immortality. The slaves, who had formerly been without the protection of the laws, and who were degraded to the most abject condition, now became, in many instances, by their efforts and example, the instruments of bringing their masters to the knowledge of the truth; and, as the effect, both united in prayer and praise to the God of salvation, and sat down together as brethren at the table of the Lord. In such circumstances, how could the conviction be evaded, of the iniquity of depriving human beings of their rights as men, or of hindering them from the free and independent exercise of all their powers, according to the will of God? Christianity, while it was silent as to external changes in regard to the existing relations of society, and the circumstances in which it found mankind, produced the inward and new creation from which all outward beneficial effects were gradually to flow. It first communicated to the slave true and immortal freedom—that freedom of which no human power could deprive him; and it thus prepared him for that change in his external circumstances, that liberty from bondage, which the operation of Christian principle was ultimately to effect. "Art thou called, being a servant?" says the apostle Paul; "care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." But if he had it not in his power to make this choice, he was required, in the spirit of love, humility, and Christian self-denial, to render service unto his master, and thus, by letting the light of Christianity shine before him, win him to the faith of Christ.

14. The same benevolent religion which has long since

removed every vestige of slavery from Europe; which has rendered it impossible for slavery even to breathe in Britain, and on whose shores, if the captive's foot but touch, his fetters of themselves fall off; the same divine religion which has effected this mighty improvement, will be productive of similar melioration in the state of society wherever its vital influence is widely felt.

15. Another class of human beings, who had been reduced to a servile state by the vice and selfishness of man, were raised by Christianity to that influential position which they were originally designed to occupy—I refer to the female sex. In elevating woman to her proper station, as the companion of man, and with him the heir of a glorious immortality, the Christian religion has purified and ennobled the springs of human happiness. It is necessary to look to her degraded condition in heathen lands, where she is the slave rather than the companion of her husband, in order to be able to appreciate the change in her position which the gospel has produced. Wherever it has prevailed, marriage has become a sacred bond, by which two beings are united in one common life, to the glory of God; and the family has assumed the lovely character of a temple of God, in which are cherished and developed all the Christian virtues. Hence, also, through the same divine influence, the abolition of infanticide, the revolting practice of which has always prevailed in pagan nations. By a wise provision for the protection of their offspring, parental affection is so deeply rooted in the hearts of parents, that, without positive evidence, it would be difficult to believe the extent to which human life was destroyed by this inhuman practice. The ascendancy of Christianity in the Roman empire arrested the progress of this evil. Constantine enacted that sufficient relief should be afforded to those parents who were unable, through poverty, to maintain and educate their children. The poor, who had hitherto been left in extreme wretchedness, who had scarcely been regarded as human beings, were now viewed with Christian compassion; and, while their wants were supplied, they were instructed in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ. These genuine effects of Christianity, and the salutary influence which it exercised on the whole administration of the government, excited the admiration of the heathen; and the emperor Julian afterwards attempted to give greater energy to the last struggles of paganism, by

recommending to its adherents an imitation of the benevolence and bountiful liberality of the Christians.

16. Such, indeed, is the nature of Christianity, that it is impossible for it to accomplish its chief designs on the hearts of men, in reference to eternity, without contributing to their present improvement; and it will not effectually contribute to their temporal good, unless it be allowed freely and fully to exert its saving and sanctifying power. "Its universal prevalence, not in name, but in reality, will convert this world into a semi-paradisaical state; but it is only when it is permitted to prepare its inhabitants for a better. Let her be urged to forget her celestial origin and destiny; to forget that she came from God and returns to God; and whether she is employed by the artful or the enterprising, as the instrument of establishing a spiritual empire and dominion over mankind, or by the philanthropist, as the means of promoting their civilization and improvement, she resents the foul indignity, claps her wings and takes her flight, leaving nothing but a base and sactimonious hypocrisy in her room."\*

17. (I.) Christianity is productive of industry. "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now, them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."† Christianity, then, enjoins diligence in business on the same divine authority on which it commands us to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Accordingly, we find that wherever it has been professed in its purity, there has been a much greater share of well-directed industry, and consequently of prosperity, than have ever existed among those who have been strangers to its spirit and influence. While every form of false religion is favourable to vice and idleness—enlightened piety and sound

\* Robert Hall.

† 2 Thess. iii. 6—12.

morality, by inculcating an active attention to business, are conducive to improvement in every department of human enterprise. A survey of the history of Christianity, in ancient and in modern times, will bring within our view the most abundant and conclusive evidence that it never fails, wherever its influence is felt, to elevate the condition and increase the present comfort of man; and that the godliness which it produces is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

18. (II.) Christianity is productive of public spirit and social virtue, and, consequently, conducive to national prosperity. If it lead all who sincerely embrace it to the practice of a pure and elevated morality; if it furnish them with motives to a continuous obedience to all the will of God; then there can be no doubt of its tendency to strengthen the kindlier feelings of the heart, and of its inclining and constraining them to do good unto all men as they have opportunity. How numerous are the arguments employed by the writers of the New Testament to induce believers to be kind and tender-hearted towards all men, to contribute to the relief of their necessities, to sympathise with them in their afflictions, and to take a friendly interest in their prosperity! And how fully have they illustrated their exhortations in the disinterestedness of their own conduct; in the endurance of labour and peril, that they might communicate the gift of God to others; and in that relinquishment of ease and of life which has constituted them the benefactors of all succeeding ages and generations! Christianity has often, and I might say always, had its patriots, who endeavoured to exalt their country, not on the subjugation and distress of neighbouring nations, but by promoting the prosperity of their own; and who readily submitted to all the privations and sufferings which terror could inflict, that they might transmit to their offspring the choicest blessings—the privilege of worshipping the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with an unfettered conscience. It were easy to mention a succession of persons whose characters were formed by Christianity; who, while they adorned the religion of Christ in private, were zealous, faithful, and disinterested in promoting the public good; and who have been the first to devise, and the most zealous in carrying into effect, every plan designed for the temporal or eternal benefit of man.

19. How striking is the contrast between the state of public



opinion produced by Christianity, and the circumstances of the people who are dwelling, or who have dwelt, in heathen lands! Even among the civilized nations of antiquity, where luxury had erected her costly edifices, and where we might have supposed the refinements of taste would have led to an improvement of the condition of the more helpless and dependent, there did not exist one charitable institution. There was no asylum for the widow and the orphan. There was nothing in heathenism that could suggest to the mind a model of elevated virtue, far less that could cherish the kindly and generous feelings of human nature. And with deities subject to all the vices which a polluted imagination might ascribe to them, how could their worshippers be otherwise than depraved in their morals, and unconcerned in regard to either the happiness or misery of others? There was not one benevolent institution in the Roman empire. While all above and beyond them was hid in darkness, they had no accurate means of measuring the distance between themselves and the beasts that perish; they wanted all the motives to sympathy and beneficence which are connected with, and arise out of, the redemption in Christ Jesus; and being left to the feebleness of their own efforts, to live without God and without hope, they have illustrated, on an extended scale, the hardness and selfishness of the human heart when unsanctified by the influence of divine revelation. If we admit that, in consequence of borrowing light from that sacred source—the heavenly origin of which they disallow—the enemies of Christianity have juster notions, and, in some instances, a purer character, than their brethren in heathen lands, we are obliged, at the same time, to believe that the philosophic scepticism of modern times is far more barren of generous and disinterested virtue, and more fruitful of the vices that are hostile to social happiness, than any form of false religion that ever existed. Paganism presented some standard of right and wrong, however defective and vicious; if it did not discover to man a never-ending duration of being, it did not annihilate the apprehensions of a future state of retribution; but infidelity, after attempting to prove that there is no God, and that we are accountable to no higher powers than are visible, aims at shrouding in everlasting night all that lies beyond the grave. What is there in this to check the selfishness of the heart, or that can prompt to the achievement of anything great or good? What would be the state of that

society in which such a system became generally prevalent? After removing every restraint from the indulgence of evil passions, it suggests not a single motive to the practice of a single virtue. The introduction of atheism at Rome, in connexion with the dogmas of Epicurus, was soon followed by an extraordinary depravation of morals; and this, again, was succeeded by scenes of proscription and blood, at which imagination shudders, and which were only terminated by the destruction of the republic. With the recent attempt to introduce a similar system into France, and the barbarities that resulted from it during its continuance, all are sufficiently acquainted.

20. (III.) Christianity strengthens the bonds of society, and, consequently, contributes to its peace and happiness, by inculcating obedience to magistrates. It does not, indeed, take notice of the comparative merits of the different forms of civil polity, nor inform us which is the most conducive to the happiness of the people; but the principle of obedience to existing and constituted authorities it strongly enforces, and thus provides for the order and stability of society. In recognising magistracy, it recognises the inequalities which subsist in civil society, and seems to intimate that these inequalities are the inevitable effect of the present constitution of things; but it counteracts, by the spirit which it forms in its disciples, the moral evils which naturally result from diversity of rank and circumstances; by fixing our attention supremely on the attainments of Christian holiness, as those alone which will avail us in eternity, it teaches the insignificance of mere earthly elevation; and by placing the monarch and the individual of least consideration in his dominions on a level in the sight of that eternal Being before whom all outward distinctions vanish, it cherishes the humility of men, which is in his sight of great value. Thus it teaches those that are elevated not to be elated, and those that are low not to be depressed; but, if believers in Christ, to regard each other as members of the same family, as accountable to the same great Lord and Master, as redeemed by the same precious blood, and as moving onwards to join the same pure and incorruptible society, where those that are poor in this world may shine as the sun, and as the stars of the firmament for ever and ever.

21. (IV.) Christianity contributes to national happiness and prosperity, by teaching its disciples to cherish the spirit and the principles of peace. It has, indeed, passed over the

question as to the lawfulness of war, in any case, in total silence; but it forms those peaceful dispositions, and inculcates those general principles which lead to the utter extinction of the art of violence and destruction. There is so much peace and good-will proclaimed in this religion to all the children of our common nature; and it expresses such a deep earnestness in attaining the salvation of man, wherever he is found wandering in his guilt and helplessness, that it is impossible for any one sincerely to embrace it without entertaining towards his fellow-creatures a kindness of feeling, which, if it be not incompatible with every species of war, is certainly incompatible with the indulgence of the passions that give rise to it. Independently of its wonderful aptitude to soften the heart, and utterly to eradicate evil passions, there is an opposition between its most solemn injunctions, and the pride, ambition, and covetousness in which the hostilities of nations have their origin. Nor will the enemies of revelation deny, that though Christianity has not succeeded in extinguishing war among the nations nominally Christian, it has introduced more humanity into its practice; and it foretells a period when its mighty efficacy will subdue the passions of men; when to its authority all the kings, and princes, and tribes of the world shall bow, and when, according to its own beautiful language, its triumphs will reach from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. We can see, in what it has already done, the earnest of that future age; and can discover, in the purifying and peaceful tendency of its doctrines, in its incentives to universal charity and benevolence, and the disinterestedness and self-denial which it requires from its disciples, the means by which, under the direction of a higher agency, it will be able to accomplish this and all its predictions. Towards this blessed consummation it is at present advancing: silently but effectually removing the barriers which the corruptions of men present to its progress; augmenting the blessings of civilization and social happiness, while it goes on to the attainment of its ultimate purposes; establishing the internal order and tranquillity of all the kingdoms in which it fixes its abode; and disseminating widely the seeds of that glorious harvest which seem already beginning to blossom and bud, and which will cover the face of the world with fruit. Possessing the grandeur and comprehensiveness of His plans, whose institute it is, it perseveres to communicate, without violence, and almost with-

out observation, its benefits to mankind ; and, like the elements of nature, whose operation, though unseen, is ever constant, it will move on with resistless progress, till the arrival of its brightest era, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever. They shall then “beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks ; nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

22. (V.) Christianity insures national prosperity and happiness, by making provision for the Christian instruction of all classes of the people. Under the Greek, the Roman, the Hindoo, and Mahommedan religions, the poor, the majority of mankind, were left in extreme ignorance. To require the instruction of all ranks in the community, is characteristic of divine revelation, under both the Jewish and Christian dispensations. Our Lord preached the gospel to the poor, and he commanded his apostles to announce it to all men—to *every creature*. With unrivalled simplicity and gracious condescension, he taught the people, who heard him gladly, and listened with delight to the words which fell from his lips. His followers, therefore, are bound, to the extent of their influence, to make provision for the Christian education of all classes in the nation to which they belong, and thus to put the means in operation by which alone society can be permanently improved. And accordingly, though little has been done, in this respect, compared with what ought to have been done, it is evident that in Christian nations, and especially in our own, the claims of the dependent and the poor to instruction are allowed, and are more and more attended to. It is in Christian lands only—not in ancient Rome, or Athens, or Corinth—that we find national systems of education provided for the poorest of the people, and a benevolent and active concern for the supply of the wants of their nature, temporal and spiritual. In proportion as the reign of Christianity advances, will knowledge increase among the people, and all the inhabitants of the lands on which it shines will be enlightened, from the least even to the greatest.

23. It thus appears that revealed religion has been productive of national improvement and happiness ; while it is equally clear, from authentic history, that heathenism reduces its votaries into deeper and deeper debasement. Christianity alone, persecuted Christianity, began the wonderful change ; and,



under the favour of God, has accomplished every step of its advancement. Till the religion of Christ appeared in the world, a reformation of heathen society was never dreamed of. The first Christian emperor issued the first prohibition of inhuman practices and amusements, which many centuries had sanctioned. Till the gospel set up its churches, and gathered its disciples, the Gentile world had never seen such a spectacle as that of a society united by bands of love, shining in the beauty of holiness, animated with zeal to do good at the expense of their property and lives.\* If the tree is known by its fruit, must we not believe that the source of so much benefit to mankind has proceeded from Him who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works?

24. But of all the auxiliary proofs of the divine origin of Christianity, there is none more striking to a reflecting mind than the fact, that it is commensurate with the progressive improvement of the human race. Every other system becomes obsolete by the lapse of time, but this possesses all the fulness and freshness in the nineteenth century that it had in the first. Physical science has been greatly extended since the revival of letters; but its numerous and brilliant discoveries do not outstrip Christianity; they only add new proofs of its truth. The philosophy of mind, also, has been much cultivated during the period alluded to; but whatever light has been thereby thrown on the moral constitution of man, has in no way diminished the evidence or obscured the glories of the gospel; on the contrary, it has furnished additional illustrations of the perfect accordancy between Christianity and the principles and operations of the human mind. Advances also have been made in the philosophy of legislation and in the science of government; but it is found, that the political philosopher and statesman improve the institutions of their country only by a close adherence to the great principles laid down in the Bible. Men of ardent and benevolent minds contemplate with delight the future fortunes of the human race, the augmented happiness of man in distant ages; but can the most expanded prospects of the benevolent philosopher surpass the intimations of pure religion in regard to the progressive advancement of our race to a higher state of moral happiness and improvement? The loveliness of that happy scene which its own beautiful language describes, exceeds even the sanguine hopes of the

\* Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity, by Dr. McIlvaine.

philanthropic heart. "The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

25. We must notice, in conclusion, the extraordinary fulness of the evidences of divine revelation. The argument from miracles alone sufficiently attests the truth and divine authority of the Scriptures; and had this been the only line of evidence, the only path leading to the fountain of divine truth, it would have sufficed to have rendered all inexcusable who refuse to follow it. The proof is also complete which is furnished by prophecy, and constitutes of itself decisive evidence of divine revelation. The internal evidence is also full and perfect of itself, and affords a demonstration of the truth of the Bible, which cannot fail to carry conviction to the mind of every man who candidly reads it. Its contents are so entirely accordant with the character of God and the wants of man, with what the testimony of conscience proclaims to be the principles of the Divine government, and with the dictates of enlightened reason as to its vastness and infinitude, as to afford evidence, clear and conclusive, that the Scriptures are the oracles of God. But while each part of this grand system of evidence is perfect in itself, and capable of furnishing, had we nothing else on which to depend, ample proof of the truth of the Bible—all the parts harmoniously unite in giving strength and immovable stability to the foundation on which the Scriptures rest their claims to be an authoritative revelation from God. "Every single miracle, every fulfilled prophecy, a thousand separate facts in the spread of the gospel, and innumerable examples of its holy fruits in the hearts and lives of believers, have furnished us with so many effulgent centres, from all of which rays of evidence are continually meeting and harmonizing in bearing testimony to Jesus as the resurrection and the life. But this astonishing flood of evidence is continually increasing. Every additional benefit which Christianity bestows upon any portion of mankind—every additional conversion of a sinner to God—every holy life that is added to the ranks of the followers of Christ—every new triumph of Christian faith over the trials of life and the terrors of death—every increase in the fulfilment of prophecy—every advance in the conquest of the gospel over the darkness of paganism—is a new stream

to swell the many waters which one day will drown unbelief in its last refuge, and make all nations and kindreds look to the only Ark of safety—to Him who came into the world to save sinners.”\*

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES SECURE IN THE STRENGTH OF THE EVIDENCE BY WHICH IT IS ATTESTED.

1. IN place of impugning the incontrovertible evidences which have been adduced in support of divine revelation, it has been usual for infidels to advance certain difficulties and objections which have often been answered and repelled. This conduct is unreasonable and unphilosophical. It is opposed to the great principle of Newton's *Principia*—that which enabled him to rise to the stars, and scan the heavens. “Whatever is collected,” says that great man, “from this induction, ought to be received, notwithstanding any conjectural hypothesis to the contrary, till such time as it shall be contradicted or limited by further observation.” Now, all that we demand in regard to Christianity is what Bacon and Newton, Reid and Stewart, have with universal consent obtained—namely, that all conjectural hypothesis be set aside, and that we decide according to unquestionable facts. We have proved, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the Bible is authentic, that its history is true, that the miracles which it records were really performed, that the prophecies it contains have been fulfilled, and are fulfilling; that the promulgation of the gospel cannot be accounted for, unaided by the power of God; and that no imposture could have produced the fruits with which it has blessed mankind. These are facts; and the evidence which they furnish is not to be set aside by a sneer or a sarcasm.

2. Looking to the strength of the evidence, we may presume that the objections which have been adduced to the divine authority of the Scriptures may all be answered. They consist, first, of the mysteries of religion; and these, in a former part of this work, we obviated; secondly, in the supposed irreconcilable nature of the facts of geology with the statements of the Bible. To these also we have already alluded; and would only further remark, that it is altogether unphilosophical to oppose the

\* M<sup>r</sup> Ilvaine's Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity.

theories of geologists to the incontrovertible facts on which the truth of Scripture rests. And, thirdly, objections of a miscellaneous nature. First, that Christianity has led to contention and bloodshed. But I have shown that Christianity inculcates the principles of peace and good-will to mankind, and that it is not chargeable with the intolerance and persecution of those who assumed its name while they violated its spirit and its precepts. Secondly, the partial promulgation of the gospel. But this objection is nugatory, since the opinions of Deists have been much more limited than the doctrines of the gospel. The blessings of providence, also, are unequal in their distribution. Besides, Christianity is adapted for universal promulgation, and every attentive observer must see that its tendency is to become the religion of every kindred and nation on the face of the earth. Thirdly, divisions exist among Christians. It is admitted; but to reject Christianity because bad men pervert, and weak men deform it, displays the same folly, as if a person should cut down a tree bearing abundance of fruit, because spiders made their webs among the branches.

3. We have now brought to a close the consideration of the Christian evidence. The strength of that evidence is impregnable. It proves that the Bible is a revelation from God, and, consequently, possesses divine authority. It should, therefore, be carefully borne in mind, that the starting of objections by those who would fain persuade themselves that the Bible is not true, is no disproof whatever of the truth of a Book, the divine origin of which is established by varied, numerous, and concurring evidences. It is no proof that the philosophy of Newton, which is certified by an induction of facts, is untrue, that theorists have advanced, and may still imagine, objections to it. Its truth cannot be disputed by those who attend to the evidence of facts. Far less can the truth of divine revelation be impugned, which also rests on the evidence of facts, by objections which have been answered many times, and which take their rise from misconception, or ignorance, or from a pride of understanding totally irreconcilable with true philosophy, or from the mere "love of darkness rather than light."

4. Nor should the end for which Christianity has been established, by evidences so various and conclusive, be ever overlooked. That end is to prove the claims which the Bible has, as an inspired and authoritative revelation from God, to be seriously attended to, to be fully and practically believed, and



to be implicitly obeyed. If, indeed, it be a revelation from God—and of that no one can doubt, who examines the evidence which has now been adduced—then it is unreasonable, ungrateful, and criminal, to refuse to give it that serious attention which a communication from God demands. Such a communication must be the truth, and the truth only; and, therefore, all its declarations ought to be received and believed as the oracles of God. But this belief, if it be genuine, will be productive of all the fruits of righteousness; will lead to an implicit obedience to all that God has commanded. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”\*

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## CHAPTER VII.

ON THE CONNEXION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES WITH THE OLD, CONSIDERED AS EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

1. THE perfect harmony of the various parts of which the Bible is composed furnishes a strong proof of the inspiration and divine authority of the whole. For they were written by different persons, and at remote intervals; yet they breathe the same spirit, and relate to the progressive discovery of the same great plan of redeeming mercy. The facts which are narrated in the New Testament are the very same that are typified and predicted in the Old. The latter contains the announcement; the former attests the accomplishment.

2. The harmony and intimate connexion subsisting between all the parts of Scripture form a striking peculiarity of divine revelation; especially when we consider, that the writers lived in distant places, and in the different ages included in the long period of sixteen hundred years; that their education, talents, and occupations were extremely various; and that the subjects on which they wrote were momentous, profound, and multifarious.

\* Heb. ii. 1—4.

rious. While the manner of expression and the mode of illustration vary according to the characteristic genius of each, the doctrines and precepts, the representations of God, his attributes, government, and providence—of man, his fall, recovery, and final destination—are essentially the same. The same accordancy obtains in the numerous predictions of the prophets. As the great scheme which they revealed was progressively discovered, it was necessary that some of them should be clearer and more particular than others; but there is no discrepancy, no contradiction. The parts mutually depend on each other, and form one consistent whole.

3. In this respect, the sacred writings present a remarkable contrast to all other literary productions. How varied and contradictory are the reasonings and opinions of the best philosophers! Is there not considerable disagreement even among respectable historians? What mere human author has ever written a book which he himself was not afterwards capable of improving? How very difficult is it to compose a systematic work on philosophy or religion, free from any defective or any overcharged statement of a doctrine or duty! The writers of the Scriptures, however, are consistent not only with themselves but with one another; and while there are in their number historians and poets, prophets and apostles, men of different talents and acquirements, of distant ages and countries, the Bible has proceeded from their hands one perfectly harmonious whole. Can this be accounted for on any other supposition than that they all wrote and spoke under the peculiar influence of the same divine Spirit?

4. The topic, however, which I mean to illustrate at present, is the very intimate connexion of Christianity with the Old Testament history and Scriptures. It cannot be justly alleged, that, in order to produce this connexion, the writers of the New Testament took advantage of the circumstances peculiar to their history and religion, in order to make out a plausible account of the death of Christ. For such allegation supposes that it was the general belief of the Jewish people that their law should receive such fulfilment. On the contrary, it is certain that no expectation of the kind generally prevailed among the Jews; that they observed the type without reflecting on the antitype; that they considered their law to be perfect without any subsequent addition. An apostle, accordingly, when explaining the prophetic institutions of the law, and

their fulfilment in what Jesus had done and suffered, thinks it necessary to prove the agreement point by point, as if he were laying before his countrymen a novel and unexpected interpretation.

5. While all the enthusiasts and impostors among the Jews who laid claim to the dignity of the Messiahship adopted the same false views of prophecy, the same narrow opinions of the design of the Mosaic institution, and the same prejudices in favour of worldly splendour and prosperity with their countrymen, Jesus, so far from flattering those favourite notions, uniformly conducted himself and his ministry in direct opposition to them. *They* first ascertained what were the expectations of their nation as to future glory and pre-eminence, derived from the conquests of the coming Messiah, and then they concurred in producing themselves in the character which their countrymen looked for, as the restorers and deliverers of their people in that sense in which restoration and deliverance were expected by the Jews; but he, in conformity with the spirit as well as the language of prophecy, grew up before them as a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness why they should desire him; and instead of yielding to the wishes of the multitude, when they would have made him a king, he embraced every opportunity of assuring his disciples that his kingdom is not of this world, and that the design of his mission should receive its ultimate accomplishment only in the life to come. That Jesus, presenting himself to them as their Messiah, should appear in a character totally different from that in which even his disciples had expected him; should deviate from the general persuasion, and deviate into pretensions absolutely singular and original; can only be accounted for on the supposition that he is the divine Person whom the prophets and Moses did say should come, whom it behoved to suffer, and to rise from the dead, that he might give light unto the people and to the Gentiles.

6. The intimate connexion between the historical facts and prophecies of the Old Testament, and the facts on which Christianity is founded, as well as the doctrines of which it consists, furnishes evidence that the whole is the contrivance of infinite wisdom.

7. The great fact from which the peculiarities of the gospel take their rise is, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should

not perish, but have everlasting life." This is an act of the divine government far more surprising than the original creation of the universe. Every prefiguration of it must necessarily have been obscure. A circumstance which bears a resemblance to this, and which seems to have been designed as a type of it, occurs in the Jewish history. Abraham is represented as receiving a command from God to offer his only son Isaac, as a victim to be sacrificed by his own hand. In obedience to this command, the patriarch, in intention and virtually, presented his son in sacrifice, and was restrained from consummating the act only by divine interposition. The striking analogy between the cases compared would seem to imply designed connexion. The one as well as the other was doomed to sacrificial death; to bear the wood on which he was to suffer; willingly to give up the life he was requested to resign; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Each was accounted dead in the sight of men, yet each was raised again, and restored to those he had left. Each was the heir of promise by descent, and to each has the promise been fulfilled. The seed of each has been multiplied "as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and in their seed have all the nations of the earth been blessed."

8. From the earliest period in the Jewish history, sacrifice occupied a prominent part in divine worship. Substitution was the leading idea which this solemn rite was intended to express. The offender was required to bring his offering, a male without blemish, to lay his hand upon his head in token of conscious desert; and the priest was to present it to make atonement for the sin that he had committed. Here the worshippers clearly acknowledged that God, the supreme moral Governor and Judge of the universe, is absolutely righteous; that sin is an offence against him, and an evil which he abhors; that death is its proper punishment; that God, in infinite mercy, is pleased to pardon the sinner through the substitution and sufferings of a peculiar victim; and thus to allow him to escape from bearing personally that penalty which he had incurred.

9. The ancient prophets averred, that the institution of sacrifice was primarily designed to afford an emblematic representation of the substitution of the promised Messiah, and of his atoning death. In allusion to the inefficacy of the sacrifices appointed by the law to take away sin, the Saviour is



exhibited to our view as thus addressing his Father:—"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not. A body hast thou prepared for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou requirest not. Then said I, Lo, I come! in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart."\* In this passage, written by a Jewish prophet, and which an apostle declares to have been fulfilled in Christ, it is clearly intimated that the Messiah should supersede all the sacrificial observances, by actually performing that which they had no intrinsic value to attain. There are numerous declarations in the Old Testament of similar signification.

10. This representation agrees with what the writers of the New Testament declare to have been the effect of the death of Christ. They uniformly speak of it as a real sacrifice for sin, to which the ancient sacrifices bore a typical reference. "Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "He himself bore our sins in his own body." "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "Christ loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." "Now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Such is the current phraseology, and the constant representations of the New Testament, with respect to the sufferings and death of Jesus.

11. The intimate connexion which is here indicated is shown in several striking particulars. In the institution of the Passover, it was directed, that on the tenth day of that month in which Israel left Egypt, every family should select a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year, and keep it unto the fourteenth day, when the whole congregation should kill it in the evening. They were further enjoined to take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of their houses; to eat it roast with fire, and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs; and not to allow any part to remain till morning. "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born, both man and beast: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you,

\* Ps. xl. 6—9.

when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be to you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”\*

12. The agreement of this singular institution with circumstances which happened so long after its appointment, and with circumstances, too, which those who might be supposed chiefly interested in the resemblance could not command, is very remarkable. On the tenth day of that month in which Israel left Egypt, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, four days before the Passover. The judge before whom he was brought declared him to be without blemish. Pilate, in opposition to his judgment and inclination, was led to gratify the Jews in giving sentence that he should be crucified; and thus was accomplished what a resemblance to the Passover required, that his blood should be poured out, and that a bone of him should not be broken. It was highly improbable that Jesus should have been doomed to crucifixion; and, had Pilate succeeded in his wishes, this would not have taken place; and yet how could the prophecy otherwise be fulfilled, which had said, “They shall look on him whom they pierced”? Nor could it have been anticipated that his crucifixion should take place on the anniversary of the day on which the Passover was first instituted; and that it was enjoined that no part of the paschal lamb should remain until the following morning, so the body of Jesus was buried that same evening. This extraordinary coincidence still further shows the close connexion between the Jewish institutions and the death of Christ; such a connexion as amounts to a fulfilment of prophetic facts, as well as prophetic words; and which renders it impossible to admit any other account of the matter than this—that the Old Testament Scriptures and the New have been written under the direction of the same divine Spirit, and that they develop one mighty plan, of which God is the Author.

13. A resemblance not less striking subsists between the great annual atonement and some of the facts included in the Christian scheme. On this day of awful solemnity, the high priest was enjoined to pass alone into the inner apartment of the tabernacle or temple, termed the Most Holy, which formed the peculiar residence of God, to bear along with him the blood of the victim previously slain as a sin-offering, to sprinkle

\* Exod. xii.

it upon the mercy-seat, which was overlooked with the cherubim of glory, and thus to make expiation for the sins of the people. The writers of the New Testament maintain that this transaction had a typical reference to Christ, the shedding of whose blood it prefigured, and whom they represent as a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world): but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. ix. 24—27.)

14. As the atonement was made by the high priest alone, so Christ is represented as the High Priest of our profession, as the High Priest of good things to come, to have offered himself without spot to God, and to have entered in once into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us. As the high priest, on his annual appearance before the Divine presence in the most holy place, presented incense, and made intercession for the people; so, of the Saviour it is affirmed, that he exerciseth in heaven an unchangeable priesthood, and ever liveth to make intercession. As Moses acted as mediator between God and Israel, when he established his covenant with them at Sinai; so Christ is described as the true and efficient Mediator, who unites in himself the divine and human natures, as approved and accepted by God, and as approaching his awful presence on behalf of mortals. As the mediator of the Sinai covenant confirmed it by taking the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkling both the book and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you;" so Christ dedicated and ratified the new covenant by his own blood. As the blood of slain animals was efficacious for the removal of typical and ceremonial uncleanness; so to the blood of Christ is ascribed the virtue of purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. ix. 13—15.) As Aaron and his successors in office were specially called and consecrated to their work by the appointment of God; so Christ did not assume to himself the honour of becoming High Priest, but always attributed his mission, his proceed-

ings, his doctrine and authority, to the express will and designation of the Father.

15. But while the resemblance between the mediatorship and priesthood of the Mosaic economy, and the mediatorship and priesthood of Christ, is thus striking, the contrast is not less remarkable. It is such a contrast, however, as is natural, and as leads the mind to the same conclusion as the extraordinary analogy. Under the Jewish dispensation, "they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue in office by reason of death; for the law maketh men high priests who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself." (Heb. vii. 23—28.) Their priesthood was symbolical, who performed the sacred services in a model and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; but his is real and perfect, and suited to all the purposes for which it is described as designed. The figurative high priest approached the presence of God in the most holy place only once in a year; Jesus is represented as continually in heaven, and ever living to make intercession. The Jewish high priest offered for his own sins as well as for those of the people; Christ needed not to do so, for he was without spot; he offered the blood of others, Christ shed his own. "He stood before the presence of Jehovah as a waiting servant; Christ sits down at the right hand of the throne, the symbolical expression to denote his possessing and exercising supreme dignity and authority: he speedily quitted the sacred place, and proved, by his own experience and that of others, the want of substance and efficiency in his services as to a moral effect; Christ abideth in the heavenly sanctuary, effectually answering all the purposes of his mediation, reigning and saving—as a priest upon his throne, conferring every blessing upon his faithful subjects, and defeating all the machinations of his enemies: he ministered on the behalf of only one small nation; Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world: he acted in the routine of a temporary establishment; Christ is the High Priest after the power of an endless life: he was a frail and sinful, feeble and dying man; Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion



over him; he is the Son and Lord over his redeemed and reconciled family, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, whom all the Church and all the angels of God worship, and to whom he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever!"

16. Finally, we observe an agreement between the way of man's acceptance with God, revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures and the New. The latter, it is true, as might be expected in a volume which professes to develop the completion of the scheme of human redemption, exhibits the way of salvation more clearly and fully than the former; so much so, that the Christian doctrine on this subject might seem to be unlike anything which had been heard in the world before. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The singular fact alluded to occurs in the Jewish annals. That people, when wounded and dying by the bite of poisonous serpents, were commanded to look, with a view to a cure, to a brazen serpent which Moses, in obedience to heavenly direction, raised upon a pole. Here there seemed to be no connexion between the means and the end, between a piece of brass, whatever might be its shape, and the cure which the looking of the people to it was designed to effect. All the wounded were commanded to lift their eyes to the brazen image, and to receive the healing which they required; as all mankind are enjoined to believe on Christ, and to obtain the salvation which they need. The remedy in both cases is provided exclusively by God; and in both cases its personal application and efficacy are annexed to the act of faith. Can we suppose that this coincidence was casual? Are we not rather entitled to conclude, that the one was designed as a typical representation of the other?

17. According to the representation of the Bible, the method of acceptance with God was the same since the first introduction of sin. Anterior to the Christian era, it was faith in the mediatorial work of the Deliverer to come; since that period, it is faith in the Deliverer as come. The institutions of the previous dispensations, by their typical and prospective reference, directed the people to seek for pardon and salvation through the medium of sacrifice; and that the real sacrifice by which any of the human race in any age have been saved, is that of Jesus Christ, is explicitly affirmed by an apostle.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his justice for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his justice: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 24—26.) Thus, according to the Scriptures, the ground of pardon has been virtually the same under every dispensation.

18. We have now seen that there exists a remarkable coincidence between the facts and institutions recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the facts and doctrines developed in the New; a coincidence which is unaccountable, except on the supposition that the Christian religion has really come from God, and has been designed by its divine Author to affix the proper signification to the ordinances of every preceding dispensation. The intimate connexion in question, it must be obvious to every one who reflects on the circumstances, could not be the effect of human contrivance, and must therefore have been the work of him who orders all things agreeably to the counsel of his own will. This conviction, if possible, will be deepened by considering further the prophetic connexion between the Old Testament and the New.

19. Christianity is founded on the mission, character, ministry, death, resurrection, and subsequent glory of Christ. Its doctrines take their rise from his person and work; or, rather, the representations given of his person and work are its doctrines. Are there, then, predictions in the Jewish Scriptures, pointing to the appearance of a remarkable personage, and describing the leading events connected with his life? To these predictions I have elsewhere alluded.

20. These prophecies are minute and numerous, and define the time, manner, purpose, and consequences of the appearing of the Messiah. They explicitly intimate the time of his arrival; the particular line in which he should descend; that a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah should be his forerunner, and prepare his way; that he should begin to publish the gospel in that province of Canaan denominated Galilee; that his ministry should be characterised by great miracles, that the eyes of the blind should be opened, and the ears of the deaf should be unstopped, the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; that he should be poor, despised, and rejected of men; that he should be betrayed by

one of his own disciples for thirty pieces of silver, with which the potter's field should be purchased; that he should be mocked and derided, and treated with contumely and scorn; that vinegar and gall should be given him to drink; that his garments should be divided, and lots cast for his vesture; that he should be pierced by the instruments of his death, but that not a bone of him should be broken; that while he should be treated as an evil-doer, and die with malefactors, he should be honourably interred; that he should rise again from the dead; that his dominion and glory should be universal and eternal.

21. (I.) The place of the Messiah's birth is expressly mentioned. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."\* In this passage, his birth-place is declared to be Bethlehem Ephratah, which was distinguished from the other town of the same name in the tribe of Zebulon. It was a place of inconsiderable importance, compared with any of the other numerous cities in the division of the tribe of Judah; but its being the place of David's nativity, and, much more, its being the predicted birth-place of the Messiah, raised it to notice. Here Jesus was born. The edict of the Roman emperor, which occasioned all the Jews to repair to their respective cities to be enrolled with a view to the demanded tax, caused the fact of the birth of the Son of Mary to be inserted on the records of Bethlehem. In addition to this, when it was ascertained, by the united testimony of the chief priests and scribes, that the Messiah should be born in that city, the inquiries of Herod satisfied him that this really was the birth-place of Jesus. The fact was attested beyond the possibility of doubt, by the cruel measure adopted by that sanguinary monarch—the slaughter of all the infants in and around Bethlehem, from two years old and under, that he might ensure the destruction of Him who was born King of the Jews.

22. (II.) The time of Messiah's appearance was fixed by the prophet Daniel at about four hundred and ninety years from his own days.†

23. (III.) It was intimated in prophecy that the Messiah should be preceded by a forerunner, possessed of a peculiar character, designed to awaken universal attention to the great Deliverer. He is represented thus:—"Behold, I will send my

\* Mic. v. 2.

† Dan. ix. 24.

messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come into his temple.”\* “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”† Now, it is certain that John the Baptist, whose spirit and character corresponded with this description, appeared a short while before Christ began his ministry, and that he claimed to be this messenger sent before him to prepare his way. “I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him: He must increase, but I must decrease. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.”‡

24. (IV.) The life, character, sufferings and death of Jesus, exactly corresponded with those of the predicted Messiah. Of humble parentage, though of the line of David, he attracted considerable notice soon after he had entered on his ministry; while, meek and lowly in his demeanour, he performed those very works which the prophets had attributed to the coming Messiah. Few of the rulers of his nation, or of the great and powerful, became his followers; while, according to the admission of his enemies, his life was full of beneficence; it was begun in circumstances of poverty, encompassed during its continuance with trial and hardships, and it was terminated by the death of a malefactor. But though he was sentenced to death with the notoriously wicked, so palpably manifest was his innocence, that even his judge acknowledged that he could find no fault in him, and, consequently, that the punishment inflicted had not been deserved. To add to the extraordinary circumstances attending his death, he was laid in an honourable tomb, though he died with transgressors.

25. In all these particulars, the life and death of Jesus entirely accord with the life and death of the Messiah; so much so, that all the circumstances of sorrow, humiliation, and suffering, which the prophets foretold as characterising the one, the apostles record as befalling the other. If the language of prophecy represents his introduction into the world to be in a lowly situation; the evangelist tells us that Jesus was born in a stable, and laid in a manger. If ancient prophecy had

\* Mal. iii. 1.

† Isa. xl. 3—5.

‡ John i. 34.



declared that he should be disowned by the great body of his nation; when Jesus came to his own countrymen, they received him not. If it had been foretold that his life should be passed amid hardships and difficulties; it is recorded of Jesus, that while the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, he had not where to lay his head. If it had been declared that the Messiah should be cut off, and that his death should be of an expiatory nature, by which he should make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness; Jesus endured the bitter agony of Gethsemane, and the subsequent pains of the cross, in which his apostles assert, that he suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. If the prophets had affirmed that, notwithstanding his extreme humiliation, his dominion and glory should be universal and everlasting; numerous and competent witnesses assert that Jesus was raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

26. Now, I would ask any candid unbeliever, whether it be possible rationally to account for this wonderful connexion between the Old Testament Scriptures and the New; between the doctrines and institutions of the one, and the doctrines and facts recorded in the other; between the minute delineation of prophecy in the former, and the corresponding character and events in the other; without admitting that the whole was composed under the direction of the same divine Spirit, and designed to develop one great and glorious plan? We have the most perfect assurance that the prophecies in question were not, and could not be, inserted by the apostles in the Old Testament; and that the events by which they were fulfilled were as much beyond their control and command, as their actually taking place was opposed to their cherished opinions and wishes. The notion of a suffering Saviour was as offensive to them as to their countrymen; and the notification of his approaching death was met on their part by the strong expression of their feelings—"Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee."

27. We have here a strong confirmation of our faith, in the truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. We behold, during the long period of sixteen hundred years, men of various employments, talents and acquirements, writing, as we believe, under the guidance of Almighty God, in perfect accordance with one another, on subjects the most profound and momen-

tous; concerning God, his perfections, character, and moral government; concerning man, his condition, and final destiny; Christ, the only Mediator, his person, offices, work, and glory; the Spirit, as the agent of man's renovation and sanctification; the state of the world and the church till the consummation of all things; the final judgment, and the fixed and eternal condition of the righteous and the wicked. "They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The consistency prevailing through all these several processes and preparative accommodations is something far too subtile for any compass of imposture, which could by any possibility have been devised by the first *human* authors of the gospel. If we consider them as the connecting links between a natural dispensation and a spiritual, proceeding from the same divine mind, there is then to be perceived in all an exquisite and most appropriate grace of uniformity.\*

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTIMATE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES AND THE NEW, CONTINUED—ON THE IDENTITY AND PERFECTION OF CHARACTER EXHIBITED IN THE SCRIPTURES FOR IMITATION, AND WHICH IT IS THEIR DESIGN TO FORM.

1. I HAVE already illustrated the argument in favour of the heavenly origin of Christianity, arising from the character of its early disciples. But there is another topic closely connected with this which has seldom been adverted to, and which I shall now suggest to the consideration of my readers.

2. There is nothing more wonderful than that identity or sameness of character which has been formed by the influence of divine revelation. The religious character under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations was the same, as to its grand outlines, as under the gospel. There was exhibited, in living example, the power of faith, of humility, spirituality, purity, self-denial, and godliness. This holy and elevated character was formed by that system of truth which was revealed at intervals during the long period of sixteen hundred years, by men whose education, talents, employments, and acquirements were various, and who did not, and could not, act in concert with one another. That this character was produced by the influence of the Bible, under all the intervening dispensations

\* Miller's Bampton Lectures.

from its commencement till its close, is a proposition which I shall now endeavour to illustrate and prove.

3. I admit, indeed, that what is called the Christian character, or the character which is formed by Christianity, is in many respects peculiar, in consequence of its connexion with the wonderful facts developed in the gospel. The lineaments of character are more marked, the graces of which it consists are more matured. But this is only what might be expected from a more perfect dispensation, a professed object of which is, to give a clearer discovery of the danger and the remedy, the extreme necessities of man, and the provision which God has made for their supply. The fuller disclosure of these truths must have a corresponding power in influencing to the discharge of duty, and in leading to the diligent cultivation of those virtues which form and adorn the Christian character. At the same time I hope to make it appear, from the following observations, that the rudiments of this character were essentially the same in true believers from the beginning; and that in this respect, as well as in others, the closest connexion subsists between the Old Testament Scriptures and the New. The origin of both is the same; and that this origin is really divine, is manifest from the effects which they produce on all who come fully within their influence. These effects have been felt and exhibited only in connexion with divine revelation.

4. I may premise, that the varied features of this character are to be found in perfection only in one person—the Lord Jesus Christ. All the virtues in him were mature; all that he did was in entire unison with the law, which requires faultless obedience, and which is holy, just, and good. The lovely character which he exhibited is the same in kind as that which is possessed by his followers, though different in degree; it is the model to which they are all to be conformed, though in the present state the measure in which it is attained by them is different.

5. (I.) Humility is a leading feature in this character, as exhibited under the Old Testament dispensations and the New. The facts which are developed throughout the Bible, when fully believed, must produce this lowly frame of mind. God is there uniformly represented as infinitely holy, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; so inflexibly righteous as to have formed a plan for its maintenance and illustrious manifestation, in consistency with the exercise of mercy. The future accom-

plishment of this plan, which impressively demonstrates the spotless purity of the divine character and government, was made known to the first parents of our race immediately after their fall; and its progressive discovery in subsequent ages, together with the various providential displays of the truth and holiness of God, had a direct tendency to communicate to man just impressions of his sinfulness and desert.

6. Hence the terms of self-abasement in which good men have spoken of themselves. They relinquished every plea founded upon personal merit before God. They regarded the benefits which he bestowed upon them, not as the reward of their desert, but of his bounty. "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." This was the uniform, and, at the same time, the natural language of men who felt the truth of the doctrines taught in the Scriptures; who, when reflecting on themselves in relation to the character of God, had a lively perception of their own impurity and sinfulness.

7. It was to be expected that this feeling of humility should be deepened by the introduction of Christianity, which places those truths, the rudiments of which had been formerly known, in a clearer, and, in some respects, in a new light. As an example of this, we may consider the disposition of the apostle Paul, as exhibited in his Epistles: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." "I have suffered the loss of all things, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of



regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Here we observe an absolute renunciation of personal desert, humility which pervades the whole character, and entire reliance upon Christ for immediate and eternal salvation. These feelings and hopes proceed on the admission that the wonderful facts developed in the gospel are true; and thus the existence of such feelings furnishes evidence of the reality of the facts from which alone they could originate.

8. For what else could have rendered this current of thought and feeling habitual to the apostle's mind? Sentiments the very opposite were prevalent among the Jews in his day, and he himself had at one time entertained them. He had then regarded his personal advantages and performances in a far different light, and had rated them as highly as others. "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he may trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."\* Besides, had he not relinquished all that men deem most valuable for the sake of Christianity? Had he not suffered, for adhering to the faith of the gospel, contempt, stripes, persecution, and imprisonment? Had he not been unwearied in his zeal, and in labours abundant, to extend to every country and city the blessings of that religion to which he had consecrated himself? He admits it all; he owns that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles: "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." After having undergone these privations and services, he renounces every claim of personal merit, and speaks of himself as less than the least of all saints. I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." This deep humiliation is most natural, if man be as sinful and guilty as

\* Phil. iii. 4—7.

the Scriptures represent him; so sinful and guilty in the sight of God, that he must be solely indebted for reconciliation to the sacrifice of Christ. The undesigned and constant expression of this humility, is a presumptive proof of the reality of the facts, that Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. For unless the promulgators of Christianity had entertained a firm conviction of this reality, it would not have occurred to them to cherish such lowliness of mind in themselves, or to require it from all who embraced the religion which they taught. "The sublimest philosophy did never drive man out of himself for a remedy; did never teach man to deny himself, but to build up his house with the old ruins, to fetch stones and materials out of the wonted quarry. Humiliation, confusion, shame, to be vile in our own eyes, to be nothing within ourselves, to be willing to own the vengeance of God, to judge ourselves, to justify Him that may condemn us, and be witnesses against ourselves, are virtues known only in the Book of God."\*

9. (II.) Benevolence forms another prominent feature in the character of good men as delineated in Scripture. The moral law commanded men to love their neighbours as themselves; and the principle certainly existed and operated in believers from the beginning. Its influence is seen in those whose example is held forth for our imitation. But this principle is enforced with new motives and obligations, and is exerted with greater energy, under the gospel. The astonishing fact upon which this latter dispensation is founded, that "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," must necessarily awaken corresponding feelings in the hearts of all who believe it. With the utmost tenderness and force does the Saviour exemplify the nature of disinterested benevolence. He, though rich, made himself poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich.

10. From this fact originated the brotherly affection which characterised the early Christians. They could not resist the softening influence of generosity like this, exhibited in the actions of a divine Person, performed to attain their salvation. They felt that if God so loved them, they ought also to love one another. They had been enjoined so to do by him who had said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love

\* Bishop Reynolds.

one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”\* The example to which they are here referred awakened disinterested love in the bosoms of many thousands, the extent of which they showed by their efforts to promote the temporal, spiritual, and eternal good of all mankind. How deep was their concern for the salvation of others, when they could address them in such terms as these: “We were willing to have imparted to you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” “We live if ye stand fast in the Lord.”†

11. Their universal philanthropy led them to regard the interests of the souls even more than those of the bodies of their fellow-men. Believing that others were still exposed to the imminent peril from which, by divine interposition, they had been rescued, they exerted themselves, with a noble and persevering generosity, to place the blessings of salvation within the reach of men of all nations and of every rank—the poor and the neglected as well as the rich and powerful. They acted on the conviction, that the soul of man, whatever may be his external circumstances, is immortal; and that its loss, in regard to its eternal well-being, cannot be compensated by the gain of the whole world. Its inconceivable value had been shown by the wondrous descent of the Son of God from the abode of glory, and his submitting to all the miseries of time, with the view of securing its salvation. Their sympathies were awakened by an example so disinterested; and, animated by a similar principle of kindness and compassion, they hastened to the relief of their brethren, devoted their time, talents, and property to their deliverance, and, like their divine Master, endured in their career of philanthropy all the reproach and punishment that man could inflict. This unbounded charity, this concern for the happiness of others, which cost their possessors so much labour and suffering, prove, at least, their firm conviction of the reality of the great facts on which Christianity is founded, and from which alone such feelings could originate. We know, from experience, that these facts may be admitted where such feelings are not awakened. But of this we are certain, that it is only the deepest conviction of the truth of the doctrines of the gospel, and their cordial reception, that will lead to the exercise of that unwearied benevolence

\* John xiii. 34.

† 1 Thess. ii. 8; iii. 8.

to man, exhibited in the writings and in the lives of the first Christians.

12. (III.) Self-denial in reference to this world, and an habitual looking beyond it for supreme happiness, form another peculiar feature in the character of good men as delineated in Scripture. For the truth of this remark, I need only refer to a few examples in the Old and New Testaments. In the case of Abraham it is illustrated with peculiar force. The principle of obedience to the will of God led him to relinquish much of what man holds dear to him; to remove from his country and kindred, and to dwell as a stranger in a foreign land. He disregarded those objections which might be offered to his design, confident that he was in the path appointed for him by infinite wisdom, and believing that, whatever might be his circumstances in this world, there was in reserve for him immortal happiness in that which is to come. He therefore obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance; and sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.\* The same heavenly principle was shown with commanding power in the conduct of Moses; who voluntarily denied himself to all the prospects of wealth and honour which had been opened to him; who, with self-renunciation superhuman, withdrew his claim to an alliance with a royal household; and, with the intrepidity of a man who firmly looked for a nobler compensation than this world could offer him, united himself to a poor and oppressed people. Surely nothing short of a full conviction of the perfect goodness and equity of the divine government, of his own personal acceptance with that God whose providence ruleth over all, and of the reality as well as magnitude of that gracious reward which he will bestow on his faithful servants, could inspire him with the courage and elevation above all that is earthly which he exhibited. "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Heb. xi. 24—26.)

\* Heb. xi. 8—10.



13. The operation of the same principle is shown in the character of believers mentioned in the New Testament. There it is demanded as an indispensable requisite to Christian discipleship. "If any man will come after me," said Jesus, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. xvi. 24, 25.) The extent to which this demand was complied with appears from the conduct of the apostle Paul. The sacrifices which he made to a sense of duty have been already alluded to. He renounced, for the sake of the gospel, all that is usually reckoned valuable in this world; and he voluntarily submitted to poverty, reproach, persecution, and unwearied labours. In the midst of his trials and distresses he enjoyed peace; but it was the peace which arose from the conscious enjoyment of the favour of God, and the confident persuasion of soon obtaining an ample compensation, by an admission into his immediate presence in heaven. He evidently felt that all which earth could either give or bestow is only of momentary duration; that God alone, in friendship with him, was his portion; that, in the possession of the very fountain of happiness, all the ills and all the joys of this transitory life are trivial; and that there was in reserve for him a pure and immortal inheritance. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 16—18.)

14. This was the conduct by which the early Christians were characterised. Persons who had practised all the impurities of paganism, who had been accustomed without control to seek their own gratification from avarice, ambition, or sensuality, became self-denying, generous, indifferent to worldly honours, watchful over their motives and actions, and concerned for the happiness of others. They considered themselves as risen with Christ to newness of life; as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, whose chief business it was to acquire the dispositions and virtues which would fit them for dwelling in the immediate presence of an infinitely holy God. The

persevering effort requisite to the exercise of such virtues, and the diligence with which they were cherished, proved how sincerely they believed, and how cordially they received, the great doctrines of the Christian faith. Had they not been thoroughly convinced of the reality of the facts on which these doctrines rest, would they have submitted to self-laceration, to part with what mankind generally regard as essential to happiness, and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus? Would they, on any other supposition, have virtually abandoned all their worldly comforts, occupied themselves in teaching the ignorant, reclaiming the vicious, in enriching with heavenly treasures the poor and the outcast, in inspiring the desponding with hope, in binding up the broken-hearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound; and without any recompence but the satisfaction experienced in doing good to others?

15. (IV.) A disposition to forgive personal injuries is another prominent peculiarity in the character of good men as delineated in Scripture. This was, indeed, what the moral law always required, as is explained by our Lord in his sermon on the mount. There was a judicial regulation among the Jews, which defined the utmost punishment which the magistrate could inflict, in cases where the offended party would be satisfied with nothing less; but the exposition of the scribes represented it as if it authorized private revenge, and even required severe retaliation. This was a manifest perversion of the precepts and doctrines of that religion of which they had been the chosen depositaries, and had little influence on the views and conduct of those who gave to this religion a cordial reception. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."\*

16. The motives by which this patient and forgiving disposition is enforced are derived from the peculiar doctrines

\* Matt. v. 43—48.

of Christianity, and, consequently, presuppose the reality of those facts from which these doctrines originate. The forbearance of God towards sinful and guilty man is implied in the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" and is plainly intimated in that parable which so strongly and tenderly inculcates the duty of forgiveness. "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"\* With the same view, the patience of Christ under unmerited injuries is adduced; who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Above all, the wondrous condescension and self-devotion of Christ are mentioned as motives to the exercise of meekness, patience, and generosity in his followers; "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The inference from this statement is, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Phil. ii. 3—5.)

17. We know that the dispositions and duties thus inculcated were cherished and practised to an extraordinary extent, both by the promulgators of Christianity, and by those who were persuaded to embrace this religion. They submitted with patience to insult and injury; they requited with kindness those who wronged them in their reputation, in their persons, in their property, and even in their lives; and the effect of the most virulent persecution upon them was, not to produce bitterness of spirit, but to lead to more fervent and active exertions for the conversion of those who opposed themselves. Conduct so singular, so much at variance with the natural dictates of the human heart, and with all that had

\* Matt. xviii. 23 to end.

ever taken place among mankind, perplexed and astonished the persecutors; they could not account for patience so unexampled, for forbearance which seemed to have no limits, for a kindly and forgiving disposition which the most grievous injuries could not abate. The gentleness, meekness, and philanthropy of the Christians, after having endured the long-continued persecutions of the world, at length triumphed; and the test of experiment demonstrated the fact, that amid tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, and nakedness, and peril, and the sword, they were more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

18. Now, on the supposition of the truth and divine authority of the Christian religion, the virtues alluded to, as exhibited in the lives of its disciples, are those which we should expect it to inculcate. They are in perfect accordance with its doctrines, and with the great facts from which these doctrines originate. For if the condition of man be such as to require the costly sacrifice of the cross, is not the deepest humility and self-abasement before God the frame of mind which becomes him? If, in his redemption from sin and ruin, the greatest love has been shown to himself by a person truly divine, is it not reasonable that he should be influenced by so powerful a motive, and feel constrained to live in the exercise of benevolence, not to himself, but to Him that died for him, and who rose again? If it was to rescue him from sin, and to restore him to holiness, as essential to happiness, that this mighty sacrifice was offered, is it not fit that he should deny himself to all that is evil, and diligently pursue the attainment of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord? If so much has been freely forgiven him by his Lord and Master, ought he not to conduct himself with tenderness and forbearance towards his fellow-servants? On the supposition that the glory and happiness of heaven are really such as the Scripture represents, is it not true wisdom to look beyond this passing scene, and to make all pursuits subservient to a preparation for immortality? Thus, the virtues which formed the character of the early Christians, presuppose the truth of Christianity, and the reality of the facts on which it rests; at least, there is in this way unquestionable evidence furnished of their thorough conviction of the divine authority of the religion of Christ.

19. Nor will it be denied, that the virtues to which I have



referred entirely accord with the avowed purposes of the gospel. These are to rescue men from sin, in its guilt, dominion, and consequences, and to make them the fit inhabitants of a kingdom of unmingled purity, peace, and joy. But without the deepest humility before God, without love to himself and to his intelligent offspring, without hatred of sin, and an innate delight in holiness; without meekness, gentleness, submissiveness to the will of God, how could they be made meet to become partakers of such inheritance? Some have questioned whether these virtues fit men for successfully engaging in the bustle and business of this world; but none have ever doubted their suitableness for the heaven described in the Bible—a heaven into which nothing that defileth shall ever enter, where the inhabitants are pure and spiritual, and where their happiness flows from the presence of the God of holiness. Nor, indeed, are they less adapted to produce the well-being of man upon earth. The test of experience furnishes conclusive evidence of the truth of this. It is when they shall be universally practised, that the whole family of mankind will be knit together in love and harmony; that “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

20. In conclusion, let us remember that the character which we have been contemplating was substantially the character produced by the cordial belief of divine revelation from the beginning. By this character there is evidence furnished that the Old Testament Scriptures and the New have had the same origin; and that the men by whom they were penned were under the direction of the same divine influence, and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The truth delivered by them having been productive of the same effects, must have proceeded from the same heavenly source.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### A SUMMARY VIEW OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.

THE doctrines of the gospel are all worthy of the character of God, and admirably adapted to the circumstances and necessities of man.

1. The account given in Scripture of the character and perfections of God commends itself to the most enlightened reason. He is represented as a Spirit, the Creator and Governor of all things; infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, goodness, holiness, justice, and truth. He is presented as the object of fear, love, and adoration; as worthy of all honour and glory; of all submission and obedience; and as entitled to the supreme love of the heart which he claims.

2. The Scripture represents mankind as guilty and depraved, a representation the truth of which is confirmed by universal history and experience. But how are they to be delivered from sin and misery, and restored to the favour, friendship, and image of God? His law has been transgressed, and his authority trampled under foot; he himself is displeased, and has declared that he will by no means clear the guilty. Repentance is inadmissible in human governments as forming any satisfaction to offended justice, or any ground for pardoning the transgressor; and that it is not admissible in the divine government, as the ground of reconciliation, is proved by the fact, that the repentance of the man who ruins his constitution by vicious excesses does not avail to heal his diseased body. The murderer suffers the penalty of the law, however sincere may be his repentance.

But the problem to which no created being could give a solution, namely, How shall sinful man become just with God? has been solved by infinite wisdom. In the gospel is revealed the wondrous method by which pardoning mercy may be extended to the sinner in full consistency with all the claims of law and justice. Here God appears to the view of the universe as the just God and the Saviour; as infinitely holy and just, and yet as merciful and gracious.

3. Hence the prominent and all-pervading doctrine of Christianity is that of a Mediator, and of redemption through him. The progressive discovery of the great plan of redeeming love and mercy, founded on the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, forms the chief theme of divine revelation. "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He suffered for sins, the just for

the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." (Isa. liii. 5, 6; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Rom. iii. 25, 26.)

If there be any doctrine in the Bible more prominently held forth than another, it is that Christ died a sacrifice for sin, a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God. This doctrine pervades the sacred volume. It is revealed by types, by prophecies, by history, and by numerous explicit announcements. The great object of the mission of the Son of God was, to give his life a ransom for many.

4. The only Redeemer is God and man; he has two distinct natures, and one person for ever. "Four principal heresies there are, which have in those things withstood the truth. Arians, by bending themselves against the deity of Christ; Apollinarians, by maiming and misinterpreting that which belongeth to his human nature; Nestorians, by rending Christ asunder, and dividing him into two persons; the followers of Eutyches, by confounding in his person those natures which they should distinguish. Against these there have been four ancient general councils; the Council of Nice, to define against Arians, A.D. 325; the Council of Constantinople against Apollinarians, A.D. 381; that of Ephesus against Nestorians, A.D. 431; against Eutychians, that of Chalcedon, A.D. 451; the decisions of which may be comprised in four words—truly, perfectly, indivisibly, distinctly. The first applies to his being God; the second to his being man; the third to his being of both *one*; and fourth, to his still continuing in that one *both*."\*

From the constitution of Christ's person as God and man, it follows, that while there are passages in Scripture that clearly teach his divinity, there are others which as clearly teach his humanity. Those who do not admit this, and explain Scripture according to its obvious meaning, but who endeavour, by perverted criticism, to deny the divinity of our Lord, are reduced to puerilities, absurdities, and what, if not blasphemies, bear a close resemblance to them. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. ii. 2—9.) "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that

\* Hooker's Eccl. Polity, book v. § 54.

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) The divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ was proclaimed by the prophets, who described him as the mighty God, as Jehovah God of Hosts, whose throne is for ever and ever. While a curse is pronounced upon the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, it is declared that they are blessed who trust in the Messiah. (Isa. ix. 6; xlv. 22—25.) There are numerous passages in the Old Testament which characterise the supreme God, Jehovah, the only living God; but these passages are applied by the apostles to Jesus Christ; unless, therefore, Jesus Christ partakes of the nature and attributes of God, the apostles were not the teachers of truth, but of idolatry.

Again, our Lord continually represented himself as equal to his Father. "I and my Father are one" (John x. 30); that is, we are one, not in counsel and in purpose merely, but we are one in nature and essence. In accordance with this representation of his nature as divine, he commended the faith of the disciples who worshipped him, and who, with Thomas, called him their Lord and their God. He admitted that the Jews, who thought that by calling himself the Son of God, he made himself equal with God, put the right interpretation on the expression, and that their conclusion was just. It was because he put forth this claim that he was accused of blasphemy. In this claim he persisted to the last; he maintained it when the high priest adjured him most solemnly, "by the living God, that he would tell him whether he was the Christ, the Son of God." (Matt. xxvi. 63.)

Further, the apostles give the same view of the supreme and proper divinity of Christ. They say, his name is Immanuel, God with us; that the Word was God; all things were made by him, and without him was not a single thing made that was made; that he is God over all, and blessed for ever; that he was in the form of God, and deemed it no undue assumption to claim equality with God.\* In estimating the force of these texts—and quotations exactly similar might be extended indefinitely—we should remember that they are from the writings of men whose avowed mission was to destroy idolatry, and establish the worship of the only living and true God. On the supposition, therefore, that Jesus Christ were a mere man, the Bible, instead of having eradicated idolatry, has given existence

\* John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Phil. ii. 5.



to an idolatry more refined, it is true, but at the same time more formed for universality and permanence, than any idolatry that ever before existed.

I omit here the numerous texts in which the love and condescension of the Redeemer are represented, and which imply the divine nature of the Son of God. To become man, to suffer and die for the redemption of the world, and to be made the Lord and Judge both of the quick and of the dead, can be an act of condescending love and goodness only in God. So that to deny the divinity of Christ alters the very foundation of Christianity, and destroys all the powerful arguments of the love, humility, and condescension of our Lord, which are the peculiar motives of the gospel.\*

This subject is fundamental. The religion of him who admits, and of him who rejects the deity of Christ, are as essentially different as are the religions of the Mahommedan and the Christian. If Jesus be a mere man, those who worship him are guilty of idolatry. If, on the other hand, Jesus Christ be God incarnate, then "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is not come in the flesh is not of God." May we be enabled to honour the Son even as we honour the Father; so that, when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, it may be permitted us to exclaim, in grateful triumph, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"

5. Justification by faith in Jesus Christ is the characteristic doctrine of Christianity. As all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; by the works of the law no flesh living can be justified in his sight. This is so obvious, that it may here be taken for granted. In order, however, clearly to understand this very important subject, there are three questions to which we must attend. First, What is meant by Justification? What by faith? And what the import of the phrase, justification by faith?

First, Justification is a forensic term, and is related to accusation. It is to be understood as the opposite of condemnation. It suggests the idea of a tribunal; of a person arraigned; of an accuser; and of a judge. Justification, in the Scripture

\* Sherlock.

sense of the term, is the act of God changing our relative state, and judicially declaring us righteous. The ground on which the righteous Judge acts thus, is the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to us, and reckoned to our account. This righteousness, wrought out by the meritorious obedience and atoning sufferings of the Son of God, is thus described by the apostle: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii. 21—25.)

Secondly, What is meant by faith as relating to justification? It is the instrument, on our part, by which we lay hold on the righteousness of Christ for justification. It is not on account of our faith, considered as a meritorious cause, that we are justified, but on account of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone—the faith that apprehends Christ for justification, renounces all merit, and looks to the Redeemer alone for acceptance before God. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Eph. ii. 8.)

Thirdly, What is included in justification by faith? This includes three things. The pardon of sin, and freedom from the penalty of the law. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Secondly, the imputation of righteousness, by which we are declared righteous before God. And, thirdly, a title, in consequence of our being thus accepted before God, to all the rewards of obedience, and to the enjoyment of eternal life.

When we are justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We who were enemies, are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. We are no longer aliens and enemies; but as children draw near to our heavenly Father, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us.

6. Conversion, its nature and necessity, are strongly pressed on our attention in the Scriptures. When the universal depravity and estrangement from God are considered, the necessity of a great change in the inward man must be very

obvious. The sacred writers represent it as a turning from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The promise of God is, "I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them." (Ezek. xi. 19, 20.) "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." "It any man be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest its sound, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (2 Cor. v. 17; John iii. 7—9.)

These passages clearly teach, that regeneration consists not in an outward change of conduct, or in a mere enlightenment of the understanding, or in the adoption of new religious opinions. There is a change of heart; a change which extends to the whole man, in consequence of which darkness, error, and sorrow pass away, and holiness, joy, and hope have the ascendancy. Where is there anything can be more honourable to us, than thus to be renewed after the image of Him that created us, and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?" And where is anything that can be more desirable, than thus to be enlightened so as to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; so as to love him supremely, and be enabled willingly to serve him?

This change, denoted by the terms conversion and regeneration, is universally and absolutely necessary—necessary in a Christian country, not less than among the heathen; for we are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Like them, we are descended from the corrupt stock of Adam; and, like them, we are in the bonds of iniquity, until we are born again. Without conversion, there is no holiness; and to speak of being happy, even in heaven, without holiness, is to talk of being well without health, or of being saved without salvation. "It may not be necessary," says Paley, "for a man to speak of his conversion, but he will always think of it with

unbounded thankfulness to the Giver of all grace, the Author of all mercy, spiritual as well as temporal.”\*

7. The Holy Spirit is the divine Agent by whom sinful man is regenerated and sanctified. Heathen philosophers seem to have admitted the necessity of divine influence. Xenophon represents Cyrus with his dying breath as humbly ascribing it to a divine influence on his mind, that he had been taught to acknowledge the care of Providence, and to bear his prosperity with becoming moderation. Plato describes Socrates as declaring, that wheresoever virtue comes, it is apparently the fruit of a divine dispensation; and Plato himself observes, that virtue is not to be taught but by divine assistance. Seneca, when speaking of a resemblance to the Deity in character, ascribes it to a divine influence on the mind. “Are you surprised that man should approach to the gods? It is God that comes to men; nay, which is yet more, he enters into them; for no mind becomes virtuous but by his assistance.”†

We are taught in Scripture to ascribe to the immediate and inward agency of the Holy Spirit, the regeneration of man, his sanctification, all the actions of Christian constancy and perseverance, all the graces and the virtues of the Christian, and all the joy and peace in believing with which the heart of the believer is filled. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.” “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.” “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye have been sealed to the day of redemption.” (Rom. viii. 9, 14; v. 5; Gal. v. 22; Rom. viii. 16; Eph. iv. 30.)

Nor is there really anything more wonderful in the internal action of the Holy Spirit on the mind of man, than the continual action of God—the God in whom we live, move, and have our being—on the material world around us. God is everywhere present by his power. He rolls the orbs of heaven with his hand, he fixes the earth in its place with his foot, he guides all the creatures with his eye, and refreshes them with his

\* Paley's Posthumous Sermons, p. 123.

† Xen. Cyrop. lib. VIII. c. viii. Seneca, epist. lxxiii.



influence, he makes the powers of hell to shake with his terrors, and binds the devils with his word, and throws them out with his command, and sends the angels on embassies with his decrees. In the wilderness, the bittern and the stork, the dragon and the satyr, the unicorn and elk, live upon his provisions, and revere his power, and feel the force of his Almightyness. God is especially present in the hearts of his people, by his Holy Spirit; and, indeed the hearts of holy men are temples in the truth of things, and in type and in shadow, they are heaven itself.\*

This doctrine, in place of forming an encouragement to sloth, is an incentive to diligence. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

8. The doctrine of providence is characteristic of divine revelation. Though the views of the ancients, in regard to this doctrine, were often erroneous, and always vague, there were few who positively denied it in every sense. Marcus Antoninus, the philosopher, maintained that the best thing for a man is that which God sends him, and the best time that when he sends it.

The doctrine of the particular and of the universal providence of God is clearly and uniformly taught in Scripture. As this position, so obviously true, cannot be denied, it is unnecessary to quote many passages of Scripture in proof of it. The Book of Psalms is full of this delightful truth. "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." (Ps. cxlv. 15.) In the New Testament, the doctrine of a divine, particular, and overruling providence, meets us continually. (Matt. vi. 19—34; x. 29—31; Luke xii. 6, 7, 22—31; Acts xvii. 26; Rom. viii. 26; Acts xxiii. 17—35; xxv. 4, 21—27; xxvi. 21—32; Jas. iv. 13—17; 2 Pet. i. 3.)

The doctrine of a particular providence is also proved by the connexion uniformly assumed and established in Scripture between believing prayer and the universal agency of God. What, indeed, is the whole of sacred history but a striking illustration of this doctrine? What are the stories of Joseph, of David, and of Jeroboam, but impressive exemplifications of it? God, unseen, ever acts, and accomplishes his purposes without interfering with the free agency of man.

\* Bishop Taylor's *Holy Living*, c. i. § 3.

Is it asked, How can there be a particular providence without a continual repetition of miracles? How is a particular providence consistent with the operation of universal laws?

It is a sufficient answer to say, that my inability to remove an imagined difficulty is no valid ground for objecting to a doctrine taught in divine revelation. But the imagined difficulty, as it appears to me, may be removed, and I shall suggest hints for a satisfactory answer.

(1.) God, who sees the end from the beginning, knows all things future; and what to us is future, is as truly the object of divine knowledge as the present is of ours.

(2.) In what we call laws of nature, there are not only general provisions made for the several species of being, but even particular cases are provided for, without innovations or alterations in the course of nature.

(3.) Men, whose nature and actions are foreknown, are introduced into the world in such times and places, as that their acts and behaviour not only coincide with the general plan of things, but also with private cases too.

(4.) Many things may be brought to pass by means of secret and sometimes sudden influences on our minds, or the minds of other men, whose acts may affect us.

(5.) There may be, and most probably are, beings invisible and superior in nature to us, who may by other means be ministers of God's providence, and authors under him of many events to particular men, without altering the laws of nature.

This doctrine, while it tends to appal the guilty, is the source of unspeakable comfort and joy to the pious.

9. The resurrection of the body is a doctrine peculiar to divine revelation. The philosophers of Greece smiled in derision at the apostle of the Gentiles, who seemed to them to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. Christ, by his rising from the dead, became the first fruits; that is, the earnest and the pledge of the resurrection of all his followers; that they shall be raised incorruptible; that the grave and the sea shall give up their dead; and that our vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. (1 Thess. iv. 13—16; 1 Cor. xv. 20—end; Rev. xx. 13; Phil. iii. 21.)

This is not the place to argue with deists on the reasonableness of this doctrine, or to prove its possibility. But it may be proper that I should make an observation relative to the kind of body that will be raised. On this topic we ought to confine ourselves to the declarations of Scripture. "The hour is coming," said our Lord, "in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."\* Respecting believers, it is said, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory; we shall be like him, and our body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body." "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."†

Such is the exalted felicity to which Christianity teaches its disciples to aspire. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."

10. There is an eternal existence after death for the whole human race. This doctrine, clearly revealed, is one of the great excellences of the New Testament. Though no theist can consistently believe that human existence ceases at death, the notions of men, without revelation of the supreme Being, are so vague and erroneous that we cannot wonder, that in such circumstances their views of a future state have been so unsatisfactory: "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel."

In the Scriptures, believers in Christ are taught to look forward to ineffable and interminable bliss, to an eternal weight of glory, to glory so vast in its amount that the sufferings of this present time are not to be mentioned. Our Lord has represented himself as saying to them on the day of judgment, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

There is an essential distinction between the state of the

\* John v. 28, 29.

† Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 42—44.

righteous and the wicked after death. The former, with enlarged capacities of enjoyment, will enter into the heavenly kingdom. "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne will dwell among them. They will hunger no more, nor will they thirst any more; nor will the sun strike on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne will feed them, and will lead them to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

On the other hand, it is said of the unbelieving—of those who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—that "they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; that their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Such is the system of doctrine which is taught in the Scriptures. Is it not worthy of the only wise God? Is it not agreeable to all our conceptions of Him who is the only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father?

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL: THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THEY ARE ENFORCED.

1. THE morality of the Scriptures, and especially of the New Testament, evinces its divine origin by its excellency. First, it was in advance of the age in which it was promulgated. Secondly, it is of universal extent and obligation, and adapted to the whole human race. Thirdly, it is suited to every period of civilization, and is ever ahead of the most refined and enlightened age. And, Fourthly, it is grounded on principles of unalterable obligation. If we take the sermon of our Lord on the mount as an example, what powerful evidence is derived from the nature of the morality inculcated, that He who taught it was truly the Son of God!

2. The moral tendency of Christianity is seen in the great change it produces on the hearts and the conduct of those who truly receive it. "So great is the efficacy of the divine



wisdom," observes Lactantius, "that when once admitted into the human heart, it expels folly, the parent of sin. The benefit is conferred gratuitously, easily, expeditiously, provided the ear and the heart thirst after wisdom. Did any, or could any, of the heathen philosophers accomplish such important purposes as this?"

3. There is unity of design in the Christian religion. Its morality, like its doctrines, tends to make man wise and holy, tends to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Ps. xix. 7—9.) The morality of Scripture has respect to the inner man—to the motives, affections, and desires of the heart. It is simple, plain, and adapted to every class of society. It is the language of love, impregnated throughout with this spirit. "Let the reader turn to the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans for an example, and read it carefully; let him find, if he can, anything in the purest parts of the writings of deists that is worthy of being compared with it. No; virtue itself is no longer virtue in their hands. It loses its charms, when they affect to embrace it. Their touch is that of the cold hand of death. The most lovely object is deprived by it of life and beauty, and reduced to a shrivelled mass of inactive formality."\*

4. When we speak of Christian morality, we must guard against the notion that it is separated, or can be separated, from Christian doctrine. Christianity is to be considered as a whole, and all its parts unite in producing conformity to the divine image. The influence of its doctrines leads to the practice of its precepts; and those who embrace it are exhorted to let their conduct be as becometh the gospel, that they may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they are to shine as lights in the world.

5. Moral philosophers divide the duties of morality into three classes—those which a man owes to himself; those which he owes to society; and those which are due to God.

6. (I.) Under the first head—the duties which a man owes

\* Fuller's Gospel its Own Witness, p. 42.

to himself—we are exhorted to govern our affections, desires, and passions, to regulate and improve our temper, and carefully to cherish purity of heart. We are entreated and commanded to practise humility, meekness, temperance, chastity, and modesty, diligence, contentment, cheerfulness, and self-denial, and to be ever on our guard against the contrary vices. Humility, Matt. v. 3; xviii. 4; Jas. i. 9; Rom. xii. 3, 16; 1 Cor. v. 7. Meekness, Gal. v. 23; Ps. xxv. 9; Prov. xiv. 17, 29; xxix. 20; Eccles. vii. 9; Phil. iv. 5; Eph. iv. 26, 27. Temperance, Luke xxi. 34; Prov. xxiii. 1—3; 1 Thess. v. 7, 8; Rom. xiii. 13; Gal. v. 19—23; 2 Pet. ii. 13. Chastity and modesty, 1 Thess. iv. 3—7; 1 Pet. ii. 11; Eph. iv. 17, 19; Matt. ix. 28; Col. iii. 8; Eph. v. 4; 1 Cor. vi. 9—19; 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Diligence, Eccl. xi. 6; Prov. vi. 7, 8; Heb. vi. 12; Eph. iv. 28; Rom. xii. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 10—12. Contentment, Prov. xxx. 8, 9; Ps. xxxvii. 16; Prov. xv. 16; xxviii. 20; Phil. iv. 11, 12; 1 Cor. vii. 21, 30—32; 1 Tim. vi. 8—10. Cheerfulness, Ps. xxxiii. 1; xcvi. 11; Rom. v. 2; Phil. iv. 4; 1 Pet. i. 8; Jas. i. 9, 10; 1 Thess. v. 16—18; John xvi. 33. Self-denial, Luke ix. 23; Eph. iv. 22; Col. iii. 9; Rom. vi. 5; viii. 13; Gal. v. 24; Col. iii. 5; Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. x. 3; 1 Cor. ix. 27. Regard to one's own spiritual and eternal welfare, Prov. iii. 13; viii. 11; x. 17; xv. 32; Jude 20; 1 Pet. ii. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 13; Mark iv. 23, 24; 1 John iv. 1; 1 Thess. v. 21; Heb. xiii. 9; Eph. v. 15, 16.

7. (II.) The duties which man owes to society, or the relative duties. These are all included under the comprehensive and admirable precept of our Lord, "Do ye unto others, as ye would they should do unto you." We are thus commanded not only to abstain from injuring others, in their person, their property, or their reputation, but to do them good as we have opportunity. We are to render to all their due in all our words and actions. We are prohibited from all fraud and falsehood, all injustice and violence, all malignity and envy. We are to speak evil of no man; neither are we to raise an evil report against our neighbour. We are to sympathise with others in their necessities, distresses, and afflictions, and to rejoice with them in their prosperity. Our enemies we are commanded to love. We are to pray continually for our Christian brethren, and for all men, and for "all that are in authority." These, and all the other duties of this class, have their foundation in benevolence. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "A

new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." " Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." " And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, loveth his brother also."\*

8. We are commanded faithfully to discharge all the duties of the various relations of life which we bear ; we are to be dutiful to parents, affectionate to children, kind as well as just to servants, merciful and just to subjects, obedient to magistrates.

9. (III.) The duties which man owes to God. The foundation of all these is in the command to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength—a commandment which our Lord has declared to be the first and the greatest. We are taught that it is our duty to be animated by ardent zeal for the glory of God, and to be supremely concerned to please and honour him. While we are required to love the Lord our God with all our heart, we are to fear his divine majesty, to trust in him with full confidence, to resign ourselves to his disposal, and to live under an habitual and practical sense of his presence. We are also commanded to aspire after conformity to God in his imitable perfections, to be holy as he is holy, pure as he is pure, and perfect as he is perfect. We are required to worship him in spirit and in truth, and in all circumstances to give him the love and confidence of our hearts.

Christian morality is characterised by the excellency of the motives by which it is enforced. To some of these I shall now shortly advert.

10. It is assumed throughout the New Testament, that Christian morality can only be really practised by real Christians ; persons who have been created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, and who are under the influence of that living faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and which overcomes the world. How can we, unless the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, be constrained by the influence of the love of Christ to live not unto ourselves, but to him that died for us, and who rose again? Unless we know the grace of God in truth, in its renewing and sanctify-

\* Matt. v. 44 ; Rom. xii. 20 ; 1 Tim. ii. 1—3 ; Matt. xxii. 39 ; John xiii. 34 ; 1 John iv. 10, 11, &c.

ing power, how shall we be effectually taught to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world?

11. (1.) Reason is adduced in the gospel as a motive to obedience. We are commanded to present ourselves as living sacrifices unto God, and to consider it as a reasonable service. Peter appeals to reason when he asks, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." (Acts iv. 19.) It is partly on this ground we are enjoined to practise the things that are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report; and are commanded to think on whatsoever is virtuous and praiseworthy. (Phil. iv. 8.)

12. (2.) The great mercies conferred on Christians are mentioned by the sacred writers as a powerful inducement to all holy obedience to God's commandments. "I beseech you," says the apostle, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service: ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." The great end of the atonement of Christ, was our deliverance from the pollution and power as well as from the guilt of sin. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Tit. ii. 14.)

13. (3.) The great characteristic motive of the gospel is the love of God—the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in laying down his life for sinners. His boundless compassion and grace in coming into the world to seek and to save the lost, are the theme of inspired teachers. As an inducement to liberality, we are reminded of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for our sake made himself poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 14.) What motive can be so influential as this? When our obligations to Him that died for us are truly felt, we can say, with admiring gratitude and praise,

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."



14. (4.) Another motive to evangelical obedience is derived from the example of Christ. What example of purity, piety, zeal for the glory of God, and beneficence to man, can be compared to his? And ought not his professed followers to be anxious to tread in his footsteps? "Learn of me," says Christ, "for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest to your souls." (Matt. xi. 29.) "Walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us." "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification; for Christ pleased not himself." (Rom. xv. 2, 3.) "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. ii. 3—6.) "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John. ii. 6.)

15. (5.) Christians are exhorted to obedience, from a regard to their holy profession. They profess to have received Christ Jesus the Lord, as their leader and commander, as their prophet, priest, and king; and they are therefore exhorted to walk in him, rooted and built up in him, stablished in the faith, as they have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. They are under the most solemn obligation to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering; forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph. iv. 1—3. They are to walk worthy of God who has called them into his kingdom and glory. Their conversation must be as becometh the gospel of Christ; and they are to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. They are to take heed, lest by any misconduct the name, or the word, or the cause of God, be evil spoken of, or blasphemed. (1 Tim. vi. 1; Tit. ii. 5.)

16. (6.) The promised supply of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen us for duty and for trial is a powerful inducement to holy obedience. We are not left to our own strength, but are assured, that, looking up to God in prayer, he will strengthen us with might by his Spirit in the inner man. "My grace is sufficient for thee; and my strength is made perfect in weakness." This promise is fulfilled in the experience of all believers. They can testify, that as their day is, so is their strength. They are encouraged to persevere in the path of duty, and to run the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus, because they can ever come with humble boldness to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help

them in the time of need. (Heb. iv. 16.) They work out their salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who worketh in us of his good pleasure. They are cheered under difficulties, and moved onwards in the discharge of duty, by the assurance that the Saviour is with them always, that he will never leave them, and never forsake them.

17. (7.) Our relation to heaven, as the redeemed of the Lord, is adduced as a powerful motive to obedience. As our citizenship is in heaven, we are to walk on earth as becomes those whose home is above. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. ii. 11, 12.) We are exhorted to have our loins girded, and our lamps burning, and to be like unto men who wait for the coming of their Lord. As sojourners, we have here no continuing city, nor place of abode; we are therefore exhorted not to seek our rest in this world, but to seek the heavenly country, even the kingdom which God has prepared for all who love him. (Heb xi. 13; xiii. 14.)

18. (8.) Another motive to holy obedience, adduced by the sacred writers, arises from the twofold purpose of our redemption and effectual calling, namely, our own salvation and the glory of God. Our salvation is to be attained by our being conformed to the image of God's Son; and the glory of him who has redeemed us is shown forth by our voluntary consecration to his service. "Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 13—16.) "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. ii. 9.)

19. How high is our distinction! We are, in proportion to our holiness and Christian devotedness, instrumental in promoting the honour and glory of God.

20. (9.) The assurance that all our services are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, is a powerful incitement to persevering obedience. Our services are neither unacceptable nor useless; they are owned and blessed by our great Lord and Ruler. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable,

always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

21. (10.) The triumphs and successes of those who have preceded us in the heavenly course. They had difficulties similar to ours to contend with, and many of them had far greater trials; for they rose out of great tribulation to the realms of light and joy. They have left on record the example of their faith and patience for our encouragement, and to be an incentive to perseverance in holy obedience. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," (Heb. xii. 1.) "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," (Heb. vi. 11, 12.)

22. (11.) The gracious rewards of the heavenly state. The motive adduced from this source is often mentioned by the writers of the New Testament, (Matt. v. 3; 1 Cor. ix. 24; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; Gal. vi. 7, 8; 2 Pet. i. 5—12.)

23. Such is the outline of the Christian morality, and such are the motives by which it is enforced. Truly may it be said that the gospel is its own witness, and bears in itself a self-evidencing power of its divine origin. Here is a system of morals which, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, cannot be improved.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

1. THE completeness of the system of religion and morality revealed in Scripture. It is so full, so harmonious in all its parts, so suitable to all our views of the character of God, and so much adapted to man in all circumstances, that we cannot conceive it possible to add to it.

2. The Scriptures admit no false principles. In the writings

of mere human authors, whether historians, orators, poets, or philosophers—however highly celebrated—are principles of action recommended which cannot be defended. Ambition, love of fame, military glory, and admiration of wealth, are highly lauded. But when we open the Bible, we are, as it were, in a new world. Not only are virtues there recommended different from those which have been held in admiration by the world, but the principles which have been held in admiration by the world are denounced.

How is this? How is it that the penmen of the Scriptures, who were Jews, wrote so differently from all their countrymen; from Josephus, and Philo, and the Talmudical writers? How is it that they wrote so differently from the historians and philosophers of Greece and Rome?—nay, from even Christian authors, who derived their ideas of truth from the New Testament? They, unconsciously, have admitted false principles into their works; and even in the few who cannot be charged with this, there are observable defects. I do not here allude to deistical writers, such as Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, for in them are many evil principles; but I speak of Christian commentators, and the writings of Christian men. Indeed, I may boldly affirm that no author, merely human, has ever written a book which at a subsequent period he himself could not improve. The Scriptures, in this respect, stand unrivalled and alone. They do so because they are the oracles of God.

3. The Scriptures oppose every evil principle and disposition of human nature. All legislators, in constructing their code of laws, have acted more or less on the principle of suiting them to the dispositions of the people for whom they were intended. Thus Mahommed adapted his laws to the depraved desires and dispositions of human nature.

But the Bible declares irreconcilable enmity against every evil disposition in the human heart. There are vices of which it says that they ought not even to be named among Christians. The principles with which the world finds no fault—principles which operate in the heart, such as ambition, the eager pursuit of wealth, pride, envy, anger, revenge—the Bible condemns in every form and degree. They must not be indulged even in thought; the disciples of Jesus are commanded to crucify them utterly, though dear as a right eye, or even necessary as a right hand. They are to cherish dispositions opposed to these; humility, contentment, meekness,



charity, forgiveness, brotherly-kindness, and purity. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemies; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good." "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing, but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." (Matt. v. 43—48; Rom. xii. 20, 21; 1 Pet. iii. 9.)

4. Christianity always keeps ahead of science, and all the discoveries of the most advanced civilization. The discoveries of modern times have left far behind the treatises which were formerly viewed as standard works. Many able and learned men have diligently applied themselves to the study of religion and morals; but have they outstripped the Bible? Have they found out any duty which it does not inculcate, or any evil principle or disposition which it does not denounce? No; because it has issued from the Infinite Mind, the source of all intelligence, it continues ahead, and will ever be in advance, of all human discovery and improvement. This is the only satisfactory reason that can be assigned why the uneducated fishermen and tentmakers of Judea and Galilee are still far, very far, in advance of all other instructors in religion and morals. What they wrote was inspired by God. They spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

5. The astonishing fulness of the Bible. This is a peculiarity which was noticed by Bacon, and is indeed very remarkable. Every reader has found, that when he has perused the works of the ablest authors on religion and morals three or four times, he has gained a knowledge of all the ideas contained in them. They are no longer read with interest or pleasure. It is not so with the Scriptures. After reading many parts of them many hundreds of times, we return to them with equal relish as at the first. The more we attentively read and devoutly meditate, the more clearly do we discover the meaning;

the more are our minds enriched with new ideas. I have my favourite authors on religion, and I frequently peruse them. They are men of genius, learning, and piety. But they are only children, in comparison of the fishermen of Galilee; and I find a fulness and sweetness in their writings which the others do not possess. Whence comes this astonishing difference? Allow the Bible to be written by inspiration, and the reason will be easily assigned. The Holy Spirit of God, whose understanding is infinite, can put such a number of ideas into a book as it shall unspeakably surpass the power of man to do, which shall one after another appear to the pious reader, and amply reward his researches. He can likewise so fill the book with good, as well as with truth, that it shall delight the heart as well as enlighten the mind, and have such indescribable charms that it will be always sweet, and fill the soul with the highest degree of mental pleasure. To these causes I ascribe its astonishing fulness.\*

\* Bogue's Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament.

## BOOK VIII.

### ON THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### DEFINITION OF THE WORD CANON—CRITERIA OF CANONICAL AUTHORITY.

1. AFTER having fully examined the evidence, external and internal, for the truth and divine authority of revelation, the question still remains for consideration—Has each of the books included in the Bible a right to the place which it occupies as part of that revelation which has been given by inspiration of God? Is there satisfactory evidence to prove that each of these books forms a part of the oracles of God?

2. May it not be plausibly alleged, that books not written by the inspiration of God may, by accident, be included in the sacred volume? In point of fact, are there not books sometimes included in the Bible which pretend to have been given by inspiration, but the claim of which to divine origin cannot be sustained? The question then is practical, and deeply important, what are the books which really belong to the Bible, and of which it consists? An error here is dangerous; for, on the one hand, if we reject a part of divine revelation, we dishonour God, and deprive ourselves of the benefit which might be derived from that portion of divine truth; and on the other hand, we are guilty of an equal offence, and may suffer an equal injury, by adding spurious productions to the holy Scriptures; for thus we adulterate and poison the fountain of life, and subject our consciences to the authority of mere men.

3. The word canon, which signifies a rule, was early applied to the sacred writings. The Fathers of the Christian Church generally use this word in reference to the Scriptures. They speak of the canon of truth—the true evangelical canon—the ecclesiastical canon. This epithet is also used by the council of Laodicea, and the council of Carthage in reference to the Word of God. It thus appears that the inspired writings were, at an early period, carefully distinguished from all other writings, and that, as the divinely authoritative rule, they were characterised by the name of canon.

4. We shall first inquire into the constitution of the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures.

We begin with the five books of Moses. When they were written by the inspiration of God, they were by divine command deposited by the side of the ark of the covenant, Deut. xxxvi. 24—26. "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites which bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee." To the law, or the five books of Moses, the book of Joshua was annexed,—Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of the Lord.

5. Before proceeding further with this discussion, we may mention the criteria of canonical authority. A canonical book must be,

1st. Genuine. 2d. Published at or near the time of its composition. 3d. Inspired. 4th. Designed for the use of the Church. 5th. Received by the most competent judges from the earliest time. According to these criteria, the books of the Old Testament are canonical.

6. Are we certain, however, that we have the identical books that were written by the inspired penmen? Of this, the evidence is abundant and conclusive; for, though the autograph of Moses was probably destroyed, with the ark and the apparatus of the sanctuary by Nebuchadnezzar, copies of it had been previously taken, and were preserved during the captivity, as we learn from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, (Nehem. xii. 23.)

7. It is admitted by all, that to Ezra was assigned the task of forming the canon, as it now stands, of the Old Testament. Without giving credit to all that is asserted by Jewish writers on this subject, we may well suppose that Ezra was assisted by others in this great work. It is probable, that he "collected and arranged all the sacred books which belonged to the canon before his time, and that pious and learned men continued to pay attention to the canon, until the whole was completed, after which nothing was ever added to the canon of the Old Testament." Malachi, the last of the prophets, closed the canon of this portion of the oracles of God.

8. It is probable that when the canon of Scripture was fixed by Ezra and Malachi, the sacred books were divided into three



volumes; the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa. To this division of the books of the Old Testament our Lord alludes when he says, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." This division is also noticed by Josephus.

9. The Scriptures included under this threefold division received the sanction of our Lord. Nor did he ever insinuate that the Jews, with whom they were deposited, were unfaithful to their trust. On the contrary, he gave to all the books which are included in the canon of the Old Testament the sanction of his authority; and referred to them as a divinely authoritative rule—the Scriptures which cannot be broken. He reproves the Sadducees for their ignorance of the Scriptures, but he never insinuates a doubt as to the divine authority of every part of these writings. "Search the Scriptures," said he, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." The apostle Paul characterises them as the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation. He affirms, in reference to the writings of the Old Testament, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. He describes them as the oracles of God—the lively oracles, the Word of God. And in reference to the Old Testament canon, the apostle Peter says, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

10. It is absolutely certain, then, that the volume of Scripture which existed in the time of our Lord had the sanction of his authority, and that of his apostles, as an inspired and infallible rule. If we can ascertain that the books which now compose the Old Testament Scriptures, were exclusively the books which were included in it then, we shall have settled the canon of the Old Testament.

11. But how can we ascertain this? First, by the quotations in the New Testament, which are made from a number of these books. The divine and canonical authority of all the books from which such quotations are made, is established. Secondly, The testimony of Josephus is very decisive. He mentions the books of the Old Testament in such terms as leave no room for doubt or mistake. "We have," says he, "only two-and-twenty books which are justly to be believed

as of divine authority, of which five are the books of Moses. From the death of Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes, the son of Xerxes, king of Persia, the prophets who were the successors of Moses, have written in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and documents, or counsels of life for the use of men. The events of our history have, no doubt, been minutely written, from the reign of Artaxerxes to the present time; but these narratives have not been reckoned worthy of the same credit with the former, on account of there having been no exact succession of prophets during that period. And what confidence we have placed in our Scriptures is manifest from our conduct; for, though so many ages have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to change anything in them, but it has become natural for all Jews, immediately, and from their birth, to esteem these as containing the doctrines of God, and to abide by them, and, if need be, willingly to die for them. Hence many of our captives have been frequently seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds rather than utter a word against our laws, and the records that contain them; whereas, what one of the Greeks would submit to any such suffering, or incur the least danger on such an account, even though all the writings they held in most esteem were to be destroyed? These, indeed, they regard merely as discourses, framed according to the *private sentiments of those who write them.*"\*

12. We have here, then, the testimony of Josephus to the five books of Moses, which are universally admitted to be, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We have also his testimony to the thirteen books written by the prophets, which are, Joshua, Judges with Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah with Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, the twelve Minor Prophets, Job, Ezra with Nehemiah, Esther and Chronicles. The remaining four books, which, according to Josephus, contain hymns to God, and counsels of life for the use of men, are Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. Thus, we have in all twenty-two books; and, therefore, we have conclusive evidence that the canon of the Old Testament is the same now as in the time of Josephus. The sacred books, though, for the sake of convenience, numbered twenty-four by the modern Jews, were formerly, in accordance

\* Against Apion, § 7, 8.

with the Hebrew alphabet, which consists of twenty-two letters, numbered twenty-two. The Minor Prophets, though twelve in number in our Bibles, were always comprehended in, and in all quotations from them regarded as, one volume.

13. Thirdly, we have the testimony of early Christian Fathers to the canonical authority of the books of the Old Testament. Eusebius has preserved the catalogue of books of the Old Testament, written by Melito, bishop of Sardis, who had travelled to Palestine for the purpose of ascertaining the number of the books of that part of the sacred volume. It is a catalogue, says Eusebius, of the Scriptures of the Old Testament universally acknowledged. It contains the books received by the Jews into their canon; and is the first catalogue of the books of the Old Testament by any Christian writer. From this record it appears, that the canonical books which were then included in the Hebrew Scriptures are the same as are now received. Melito flourished about the middle of the second century. About the year 230 of the following century, Origen gave a catalogue of the books of the Old Testament, and which contains the books which are now received. Though in the manuscript copies of this catalogue that have been examined, there is no mention of the Minor Prophets, it is certain that Origen received as canonical the book known by that designation. After the catalogue of Origen, we have a catalogue of the books of the Old Testament by Athanasius, by Cyril, by Augustine, by Jerome, by Ruffin, by the Council of Laodicea, and by the Council of Carthage. These catalogues exactly correspond with the canonical books as now received.

14. Fourthly, we have additional evidence of the canonical authority of the books of the Hebrew Bible arising from the fact, that these books have been, ever since the time of Christ and his apostles, in the keeping of both Jews and Christians, who have been constantly arrayed in opposition to each other, so that it was impossible that any change should have been made in the canon, by either party, without being immediately detected by the other. Is it not conclusive evidence that no change has taken place, when these parties, on this subject, are agreed? The Hebrew Bible of the Jews is precisely the same as the Hebrew Bible of the Christians—of Protestant Christians.

15. In conclusion, it deserves our notice, in summing up the evidence on this subject, that shortly after the canon of the Old Testament was completed, the Septuagint translation was

made. This version contains the books of the canonical Hebrew Bible,—a proof that these books were in the canon when this version was made. With regard to the books of Moses in the Samaritan Pentateuch, it ought to be remarked that it has existed in a separate form from the Jewish copies, and has been preserved and handed down to us by a people hostile to the Jews. The Samaritans became a distinct people immediately after the revolt of the ten tribes; and, consequently, we have evidence that the books of Moses have been preserved uncorrupt during a period of nearly three thousand years.

16. We shall now proceed to the consideration of the apocryphal books, and of the great importance of distinguishing the canonical books from them.

17. The word apocrypha, which signifies obscure, or without authority, is used to denote those books which have often been bound up with the sacred volume, but which are not canonical. The question with Christians always has been, not whether canonical books only are of divine authority, but what are the books which ought to be considered canonical, and what apocryphal. In regard to those that have already been considered as included in the Hebrew Bible, both Jews and Christians are agreed.

18. But to these books, which are undoubtedly of canonical and divine authority, the Council of Trent added the books of Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two books of the Maccabees. They also added certain chapters to the books of Esther and Daniel, which were never in the Hebrew copies. They, at the same time, rejected certain other books which are usually bound up with the Latin Bible, which are certainly apocryphal, such as the third book of Maccabees, and the appendix to Job.

19. Both the former and the latter class of books are destitute of canonical authority; and as they cannot be invested by that high character by all the Councils that have ever existed, they ought not to be inserted in the sacred canons.

20. (I.) They are not, and they never have been, in the Hebrew Bible. The Greek language, in which they are written, was not known to the Jews till after the gift of inspiration had ceased, and the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures had been closed. Even though some of these apocryphal writings should now be in Hebrew, they are to be viewed as translations from the Greek, the language in which they were originally



written. They are the productions of uncertain authors, who lived long after Malachi, the last of the prophets.

21. (II.) The Jews, though the authors of these books belonged to the Jewish nation, never admitted them into the canon. The ancient and the modern Jews are agreed in rejecting them as apocryphal, and utterly unworthy of a place in the canon. Ought we not to have some regard on this subject to the opinions of those to whom were committed the oracles of God? Men who, according to the testimony of our Lord and his apostles, were faithful to their trust, ought surely to have great weight with us in the opinion which, in regard to this matter, they have unanimously and uniformly given.

22. (III.) Of these apocryphal books there is no notice taken in the New Testament; they are never alluded to by our Lord or his apostles. The attempts of the Romanists to show that two or three passages are quoted by the apostle Paul are futile and vain, and unworthy of notice. In fact, if these apocryphal books were then known, they were utterly disregarded, as well by Christ and his apostles as by Josephus; and we must, therefore, wholly repudiate them as having no claim to canonical authority.

23. (IV.) These books were rejected as apocryphal by the Christian Fathers. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest of the Fathers, does not quote a passage from any of them. We have already alluded to the catalogue of the books of the Old Testament by Melito, Bishop of Sardis, and which is preserved by Eusebius. In that catalogue, in which we have an enumeration of all the canonical books which were included in the Hebrew Bible, and which was compiled by one who tells us that he went "into the East, to the very place where these things were published and transacted, and had made diligent search after the books of the Old Testament"—in that catalogue, in which are mentioned by name all the books which were received by the Jews as of divine authority, there is not a single allusion to any of the apocryphal writings. I have already alluded to the catalogues of the books of the Old Testament by Origen and Athanasius, in which the books which are canonical, and exclusively so, are mentioned. Gregory Nazianzen, while he exhorts to the study of the sacred books, guards his readers against such as were apocryphal, and he then mentions the twenty-two books of the Old Testament. "Let no one," says he, "add to these divine books, nor take away anything from them.

I think it necessary to add this, that there are other books besides those which I have enumerated as constituting the canon, which however do not appertain to it." He then mentions by name the apocryphal books as belonging to this class. Cyril of Jerusalem exhorted to read nothing which is apocryphal, but to read the Scriptures, namely, the twenty-two books of the Old Testament.

24. The Council of Laodicea, about the middle of the fourth century, prohibited the reading of any books in the churches but such as were canonical, and of these a catalogue was given by them corresponding with the present canon of the Old Testament. Jerome, in his preface to his translation of the Scriptures from Hebrew into Latin, after mentioning the canonical books according to the Hebrew Bible, says that all besides them must be placed among the apocryphal. Although Augustine, who had been accustomed to read the Greek and Latin Bibles only at the earlier period of his Christian course, at one time seems to have had some doubt as to the propriety of excluding the apocryphal books from the canon, he afterwards expressed the strongest opinion upon this subject. In his work *De Civitate Dei*, he says, "Even the reprobate Jews hold that Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Malachi, were the last books received into canonical authority."—"The Jews are our librarians." But though Augustine did not place the apocryphal writings on a level with the canonical books, it may be admitted that he continued to entertain too high an opinion of them.

25. I shall not adduce any more testimonies in support of the position, that the apocryphal writings were rejected as forming any part of the canon, by the Fathers of the Christian Church. It was not till the Council of Trent decreed that they should be received as divine, and pronounced anathema on all who disobeyed their decree, that they were at all regarded as canonical. A council whose decrees are enforced by pains and penalties may do many things; but it cannot make that true which is false, nor constitute a book inspired which was not written by inspiration. The canon of divine revelation was closed by the apostles, and all the popes and councils that have existed are unable to give the character of inspired truth to a single book or a single sentence, so as to give it a rightful claim to a place in the sacred canon. The decision, therefore, of the Council of Trent in regard to the apocryphal books, was foolish as it was impious. It was a wicked attempt to mingle false-

hoods and fables with the oracles of God, and to place them on a footing of equality with that truth which is perfect and which converts the soul.

26. (V.) There is internal evidence in these books to prove that they are not canonical. A book cannot be from God which contains falsehood, or which expressly contradicts doctrines which we know to be from God. The self-evidencing power of the Scriptures attest their divine authority; but the self-contained evidence of the apocryphal books tends to prove, that they have not the character of the oracles of God, and have no right to a place among them.

27. It is in the power of every one to satisfy himself on this head. An angel of God is represented in the book of Tobit as telling a falsehood. In one place he affirms that he is Azarias, the son of Ananias the Great; while in another place he declares, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels which present the prayers of the saints, and go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." Judith is said to have presented the following petition to the God of truth:—"Smite, by the deceit of my lips, the servant with the prince, and the prince with the servant."

28. Suicide is spoken of with high commendation in the second book of Maccabees—a crime which is condemned by the letter and the spirit of the law of God. Can we believe that a book has been given by inspiration of God, which approves of a deed which those books which we know are from God represent as the greatest crime?

29. It is unnecessary to quote at length the absurdities, contradictions, and falsehoods, which are to be found in the other apocryphal writings; in the book of Baruch; in the chapters added to the book of Esther; in the book of Judith. We are not only warranted, but we are required by the highest obligations, to exclude books, the contents of which are so contrary to truth and reason, from the canon of sacred Scripture.

30. (VI.) As these books were not written by prophets, or by men who laid claim to inspiration, it is evident that they cannot be received as the oracles of God. Whether the opinion of Jerome and Eusebius, that Josephus was the author of the books of the Maccabees, is well founded or not, these books have no more claim to canonical authority than the other writings of that distinguished man.

31. There is, indeed, one apocryphal book, the book of

Wisdom, which claims to have been written during the age of the prophets, and to be the work of Solomon. But what evidence have we of this? On the contrary, we have proofs the most satisfactory, that its author lived after the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures was completed. The allusions to the Grecian philosophy and customs are numerous and manifest. The author, unlike the inspired writers, is full of his own praise. Whether this book was the production of Philo Judæus, or some other author, it has no just claim to divine or canonical authority. Had it been the work of Solomon, to whom it has been ascribed, it would have been found in the language of Solomon, the Hebrew tongue, and its style, in place of being artificial, would have been simple and natural.

32. Ecclesiasticus, written by the son of Sirach, is admitted to be the best of all the apocryphal books. But the author did not claim inspiration.

33. We affirm, then, that the authors of the apocryphal books, did not themselves lay claim to inspiration, and that they have not represented their writings as the oracles of God. Why should we join in the impious task of attempting to raise them to a position which they never were designed to occupy, and of placing them on a level with the words of inspiration? Not having been written by divine inspiration, it is impossible for either pope or council to make them divine.

34. By what theory do the Romanists attempt to set this evidence aside, and to justify the Council of Trent in elevating the mere productions of man to a level with the Book of God?

35. In the first place, they allege that some of the books of Scripture are Proto-Canonical, and others Deutero-Canonical; a distinction by which they mean, not that some books are canonical, and others ecclesiastical—but there was a first and a second canon, the latter having been subsequent to the former, and having been constituted by a competent authority. It being demonstrable that this second canon was not constituted prior to the fourth century, it is alleged that it was sanctioned by some of the councils of that period. But it is certain that no council of the fourth century determined anything on this subject. What right or authority had any council of that period to add to the canon of Scripture books which had been rejected before as apocryphal? These books were either canonical before the fourth century, or they were not; if the former, how came it to pass they were not recognised by



the apostles? How came they to be overlooked and rejected by the primitive Fathers? But if they were not canonical before, they must have been made canonical by the decree of some council; that is, the Church can make an inspired book which was never given by inspiration. This supposition, absurd and even impious as it is, forms the chief ground upon which the procedure of the Church of Rome, in regard to the apocryphal books, is founded. But how dishonouring to God and to his word, and how injurious to the immortal interests of mankind, is it to place the writings of uninspired men, however excellent they may be, on a level with the oracles of God! And surely the prohibitions and threatenings with which the volume of divine revelation concludes ought to deter men, whether acting as individuals or in councils, from the impious attempt. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

36. In regard to the question that has often been asked in connexion with this subject, namely, Has any canonical book of the Old Testament been lost, I do not attach great importance to it. Those who allege that some books have been lost, found their opinion upon such expressions as the following:—"He [that is Solomon] spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes." The productions which are here alluded to are not now in existence. "The acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer; with all his reign, and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries." There is also reference in Scripture to the book of Jasher.

37. (I.) It does not follow, that because a book is quoted by an inspired author, that the book from which he quotes was written by inspiration. The apostle Paul quotes the Greek poets.

38. (II.) Neither does it follow, that all the writings of a person who at some time or other of his life has been favoured with the gift of inspiration, were inspired. We have no reason to think that the prophets and apostles were under plenary inspiration, except when their writings or their actions were

designed by Infinite Wisdom to form a divinely authoritative rule for the Church in all future ages.

39. (III.) It is supposed that we have some of the books now in the canon which are alleged to have been lost. It is conjectured that the book of Jasher is one of the books of the Pentateuch, or the whole law; and that the book of the wars of the Lord is the book of Numbers.

40. Be this as it may, we have no evidence that any canonical book of the Old Testament Scriptures has been lost. On the contrary, have we not reason to believe, that the providence of God would watch over, and carefully preserve what was intended for the instruction of mankind? In point of fact, divine providence has in a remarkable manner preserved uncorrupt the sacred Scriptures. Nor have the Jews, with whom the books of the Old Testament have been deposited, ever been charged with carelessness in their preservation. They preserved them without mixture or mutilation; and, therefore, their fidelity to their trust was admitted by our Lord and his apostles.

41. Before concluding our observations on the canon of the Old Testament, it may be proper that we should take notice of the oral law of the Jews; for while we are agreed with them as to the canonical books of the Hebrew Bible, we entirely differ from them in regard to what they call the oral law.

42. They maintain that, in addition to the written law, God communicated to Moses another law which was not written, and which was transmitted by tradition. It was transmitted chiefly, though not exclusively, according to the Jewish doctors, through the line of the high priests. It is alleged, that the oral law was transmitted by unbroken succession from Moses to Judah Hakkadosh, by whom it was committed to writing. Judah, who was held in great reputation for his sanctity, on which account he received his surname of Hakkadosh, that is, *the holy*, presided over an academical institution at Tiberias about the middle of the second century. Digesting all the traditions he could collect, he committed them to writing in six books. This compilation, which is known by the name of Mishna, was received by the Jews with great veneration; and their doctors immediately wrote commentaries upon it. The comments are called the Gemara, or the compilation; and the Talmud consists of the Mishna and Gemara—the oral law committed to writing, and the comments upon it. The doctors, however, among the Jews residing in Babylonia, wrote comments on the

Mishna, as well as the Jewish doctors of Judea; and hence the formation of two Talmuds; the one called the Jerusalem Talmud, the other the Babylonish Talmud. Though the text in both these Talmuds is the same, the comments are very different. The Jerusalem Talmud was completed in the third century, the Babylonish Talmud in the fifth. The former is printed in one folio volume; the latter in twelve, and is held in higher estimation by the Jews.

43. Indeed, the Talmud is higher in the estimation of that people than the Scriptures. A saying of one of their rabbies who is held in great veneration is, "That the oral law is the foundation of the written; nor can the written law be expounded but by the oral." The bearing of all their sayings on this subject is, to disparage the reading of the Scriptures in comparison of the reading and studying of the Talmud. The minds of the Jews are in this way directed from the oracles of God to the most absurd and fabulous traditions—traditions which make void, and of none effect, the declarations of inspired truth.

44. How deplorable is this result, when we can prove that the whole fabric is without foundation—that there is not, and never has been, an oral law communicated by Moses, and orally transmitted from age to age!

45. (I.) There is no allusion to any such law in the Books of Moses, nor in any other part of the Bible. There is no mention of it in any authentic record for two thousand years after the time of Moses.

46. (II.) How could a law orally transmitted be presumed to be preserved uninjured during the vicissitudes of the Jewish nation? When we know the proneness of that people to relapse into idolatry; that at one period the written law was so entirely neglected, that the pious king Josiah expressed his surprise when a copy of it was found; how can we believe that an oral law, even if it had existed, would have been preserved? And if it were once lost, how could it be again recovered?

47. (III.) The Jews who allege that Moses was prohibited from committing the oral law to writing, show by their own conduct in committing it to writing, either that they do not believe that there was any such prohibition, or that they violate, and continue to violate, a positive precept.

48. (IV.) The law which Moses received from God, the same he was commanded to write. It is expressly said, that

“Moses told the people all the words of the Lord.—And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.” There is not a single instance in which the people are called to obey any other than the written law. When Moses had finished his last and affecting address to the people, it is added, “And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read it before all Israel in their hearing.”\* There is here no allusion to an oral law which was to be repeated at their solemn convocations. It was the written law, and the written law alone, that the people were to be made acquainted with; it was for the violation of that law only, that they were reprovèd by the prophets; and it was to the law and the testimony as written, that the people were always referred. Accordingly, it was the written law only that was read to the people in the time of Ezra. The priests and “the Levites caused the people to understand the law: so they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading.”

49. (V.) The perfection which is attributed to the written word of God seems inconsistent with a supplemental law. How can an oral law be required, when we possess a law which is declared to be perfect? “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.—Ye shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”

(VI.) Obedience was not required to any commandment not contained in the written law—a proof that there exists no other law than that which is written.

50. In conclusion, we must remark, that many of the Jews have always been of this opinion. They have rejected tradition, and have faithfully adhered to the written word.

51. I have entered the more fully into the consideration of this subject, in order to show how necessary it is to convince the Jews that the whole system of traditionary law is false and unfounded, and that our appeal must be to the written

\* Deut. xxxi. 9—11.



law and the testimony. The children of Abraham must renounce the inventions of men to which they now cling, and return to the oracles of God, before we can hope to convince them that He concerning whom Moses and the prophets did write is already come.

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## CHAPTER II.

THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES CONTINUED—ON THE  
CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. WE have seen that the books which now constitute the canon of the Old Testament were always received as canonical. We have also seen that the books called apocryphal have no claim to be ranked with the oracles of God; on the contrary, that they ought to be rejected as containing falsehoods and fables, and doctrines directly opposed to the truths of God. This consideration of itself, independently of the circumstance that they are destitute of all external evidence, proves how unworthy they are of a place in the sacred volume.

2. I have already alluded to the absurdities, superstitions, and falsehoods, which are contained in them; and without noticing at present all the erroneous doctrines which they inculcate, such as those of purgatory, and prayers for the dead, I shall only advert to the pernicious sentiments which they contain in regard to justification before God. The doctrine of Scripture on this head is, that we are justified by faith in Christ, without the works of the law. But the apocryphal books teach that whosoever honoureth his father maketh an atonement for his sins—and that alms maketh an atonement for sins.

3. While it is thus evident that these books have no claim to a place in the Scripture canon, but are the production of lying prophets, and therefore under the curse pronounced on such by God, there are others who have contended that certain books included in the Jewish canon do not constitute a part of divine revelation. This has been particularly the case respecting the Book of Esther, and the Song of Solomon, which, it has been alleged, are not quoted in the New Testament. But though this may be true as to particular passages, yet the books themselves are quoted each time that either the Lord Jesus Christ or his apostles refer to what is written, or to the Scriptures of which they form a part. Exceptions

have been made to these books from their contents, and on this ground their claims to be canonical have been doubted. Such a sentiment is the effect of inconsiderate rashness and presumption. The authority of Jesus Christ has given a sanction to every book in the Jewish canon, and blasphemy is written on the forehead of that theory which alleges imperfection, error, or sin, in any book in that sacred collection. The incontrovertible proofs of their authenticity and inspiration are, that they form a part of those Scriptures which were committed to the Jewish Church, and sanctioned by the Lord and his apostles. Could it be shown that any one of them is not worthy of being received as a part of the sacred canon, that would invalidate the claim of all the rest.

We shall now proceed to the consideration of the canon of the New Testament.

4. (I.) Whereas the canon of the Old Testament was settled by Ezra, an inspired writer, that of the New Testament was fixed after inspiration had ceased in the church; or, rather, the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume after this.

5. (II.) Our Lord and his apostles sanctioned the canon of the Old Testament; but the books of the New Testament were collected into the canon after the death of the apostles.

6. (III.) The apocryphal books which lay claim to a place in the canon of the Old Testament are few; whereas the apocryphal books under the Christian dispensation are numerous.

7. The questions, What is it that constitutes each of the books, of which the New Testament consists, canonical? At what time were these books collected into one volume, and denominated the New Testament? These are distinct and different questions.

8. With regard to the first, What is it that constitutes each of the books, of which the New Testament consists, canonical? The doctrine of the Romish Church is, that there is a power lodged in the Church of Rome to determine what books shall be received as the oracles of God. The absurdity and impiety of this tenet—a tenet which leads to the subversion of divine revelation—it is unnecessary to point out. It is because the books of which the New Testament consists have been given by inspiration of God, that they are possessed of divine and canonical authority, and not because they have received the

sanction of any church, council, or body of men. The divine origin of each of the twenty-seven books of which the New Testament consists, constitutes its undoubted title to canonical authority—an authority which no church or society could have either diminished or increased, and an authority which each book would have inherently retained if they had not been collected into one volume. The canon of the New Testament therefore was completed, when, in the order of time, the last book contained in it was written and published.

9. As to the second question mentioned, namely, At what time were the books of the New Testament collected into a volume?—the answer is, That in the nature of things, this must have been done in some places at an earlier, and, in other places, at a later period. These books, generally, were addressed to particular churches; and, of course, the churches near to what we may call the place of publication, must have procured copies sooner than those which were more remotely situated. And when we remember, that there was no other method of multiplying copies than by writing every letter with the pen, it is surprising how so many churches and individuals could be supplied with the books of the New Testament. That they eagerly sought after them, and spared neither trouble nor expense in obtaining them, we are assured of by the citations from these books by the earliest Christian writers. It was, indeed, natural that the followers of Christ should have eagerly desired to obtain an authentic account of the ministry of our Lord, and a collection of the writings of his inspired apostles. It was only necessary for them to feel assured that the writings which they did receive were those of inspired men. The apostle Paul, “that the churches to which he wrote might have the assurance of the genuineness of his epistles, from seeing his own handwriting, constantly wrote the salutation himself; so much care was taken to have these sacred writings well authenticated, on their first publication. And on the same account it was, that he and the other apostles were so particular in giving the names and the characters of those who were the bearers of their epistles.”

10. With respect to the autographs, or original letters of the apostles, we learn, from the testimony of Tertullian, that they were preserved by the churches to which they were addressed, and in existence at the time when he wrote. This is the conclusion to which the fair construction of his language

leads. Perhaps it was a merciful ordination of Providence, that these autographs should not have been transmitted to our times, since they might have been superstitiously venerated and idolized like the brazen serpent. The divine truth contained in them has been preserved with sufficient accuracy; and it is that, and that alone, which is designed for the salvation of the world.

11. We know, then, that the books of the New Testament are the genuine writings of inspired men, and that they were held in the highest estimation from the beginning. We are assured of this from authentic testimony. They were publicly read as the oracles of God with profound attention and veneration in the churches, and regarded as a divinely authoritative rule of faith and practice. They were received as canonical by all the followers of Christ in every part of the world. The very doubts which were entertained for a time by the remoter churches regarding some of them, furnish evidence of the care and diligence which were manifested in distinguishing the genuine writings of inspired men from all other books.

12. We have satisfactory evidence of this in the catalogues of those books which were published at an early period by some of the Fathers, and by several Councils. One of the first of these is by Origen, who is so highly distinguished for his literature, and who was so capable of forming a correct judgment on this subject. In this catalogue mention is made of the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, fourteen Epistles of Paul, two of Peter, three of John, and the Book of Revelation. The omission of the Epistles of James and Jude was accidental, not designed, as in other parts of his writings he acknowledges these epistles as canonical. The catalogue of Eusebius, the historian of the church, is equally precise and satisfactory; it is preserved in his ecclesiastical history. He mentions all the canonical books of the New Testament; but he takes notice of the doubts that some entertained of the Epistle of James, the second of Peter, and second and third of John. While he declares his own opinion of the canonical authority of the Book of Revelation, he admits that some did not receive it. Athanasius, so distinguished in the history of the church, has left a catalogue of the books of the New Testament, which is in exact accordance with the present canon. The same remark is applicable to a catalogue given by Cyril,



a cotemporary of Athanasius and Eusebius, except that he has omitted the Book of Revelation.

13. About the middle of the fourth century, we have the catalogue of the Council of Laodicea, which also corresponds with our canon, except that the Book of Revelation is omitted. This catalogue of the books of the New Testament was received by the whole Christian Church ; so that, in the middle of the fourth century, the consent of all the followers of Christ in all parts of the world was given to the canon of the New Testament, with the exception of the Book of Revelation, concerning the canonical authority of which some persons entertained doubts. A few years after the meeting of the Council of Laodicea, Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, in the island of Cyprus, gave a catalogue of the canonical books of the New Testament, which is the same as the present canon. Gregory Nazianzen mentions all the books of the New Testament, except the Revelation. Jerome, who lived a few years later, and who translated the whole Bible into Latin, has left a catalogue corresponding to the received canon. Though he speaks of the uncertainty of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is evident that he believed in its divine and canonical authority. It is unnecessary to mention the catalogues of Rufin, of Augustine, and of the Council of Carthage, any farther than to say, that they accord with the received canon.

14. In addition to catalogues, we have evidence to prove that the books of the New Testament were received as canonical, arising from the manner in which they were quoted, and appealed to as divinely authoritative by Christians in all parts of the world. This shows that they believed that these writings, and that these alone, formed the canon of the Scriptures of the New Testament. They did not, as Toland and Dodwell allege, quote indifferently and promiscuously the books which we now receive, and others which are now rejected as apocryphal ; they quoted as Scripture, divine and authoritative, the books which are most surely believed by Christians to have been given by inspiration of God.

15. Further, these books were at an early period publicly read in all the churches as the oracles of God. The practice which had been in use in the Jewish synagogues of reading the Holy Scriptures, was continued in the Christian Church. To this practice there is allusion in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col. iv. 16). And Justin Martyr, who lived so near the times

of the apostles, says, that "on the day which is called Sunday, there is a meeting of all Christians who live either in cities or country places, and the memoirs of the apostles, and writings of the prophets, are read." What method could be more effectual for making known to the whole Christian community what were the genuine productions of inspired men; what were the divine and canonical books? In this way they were, from the beginning, put on their guard against spurious and apocryphal writings. The plan in operation for this end in the Christian Church, from its foundation, had all the efficiency and effect which a chain of signal-posts has over a great empire in admonishing the inhabitants of the approach of an enemy.

16. Christians were cautioned against reading any books, except those that were received as canonical and were publicly read in the churches. Cyril exhorted his catechumen to study carefully those Scriptures only which are publicly read in the church. "Let others," says he, "be rejected, and such as are not read in the churches, neither do you read in private." The Councils of Laodicea and of Carthage decreed, that only the canonical writings of the Old and New Testaments should be read in the churches. It is true that, in some instances, the Epistle of Clement, and the book called the Shepherd of Hermas, were read in churches. And it is also certain, that the Book of Revelation was not read in some churches. But it should be carefully observed, that some of the Fathers distinguished the books read in the churches into canonical and ecclesiastical, and the Epistle of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas were of the latter description. We shall notice afterwards the reason why the Book of Revelation was not read in all the churches.

17. Again; another source of evidence in proof of the divine and canonical authority of the books of the New Testament is derived from the early versions of that volume into other languages. The translation of the Scriptures into numerous languages was rendered necessary by the diffusion of Christianity into regions where the Greek was not the vernacular tongue. And it became the more necessary, after the gift of tongues had ceased in the church. We may, therefore, conclude from the necessity of the case, that the Christians in Syria, Mesopotamia, and in Italy, would have the Scriptures translated into their own language immediately after the death of the apostles. We are confirmed in this opinion by the fact, that the version of Jerome, commonly called the Vulgate, was a new version of a

translation of the Scriptures into the Latin tongue, which had been in existence long before the time of Jerome.

18. The old Syriac version of the New Testament, or the Peshito, which, in the opinion of the best Syriac scholars, was made before the close of the first century, furnishes evidence of the canonical authority of the books which are contained in it. It contains the four Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, including that to the Hebrews, the First Epistle of John, the First Epistle of Peter, and the Epistle of James. As to the two or three books which are received into the canon, but which are here omitted, it is probable either that they were unknown to the translator, or that he had not sufficient evidence of their genuineness. We may remark on this subject,

19. (I.) That there is a wonderful agreement among those who have given catalogues of the books of the New Testament from the earliest period. Of thirteen catalogues which have come down to us, seven exactly correspond to the received canon. And the difference in three of the remainder consists in the omission of the Book of Revelation, and in the other two, of some of the smaller epistles, not because the persons who wrote these catalogues believed these books to be destitute of canonical authority, but chiefly because they had not completely ascertained the evidence of their genuineness.

20. (II.) It appears that Christians in all parts of the world were early agreed as to the canon of Scripture, and that only heretics were charged with rejecting any canonical book.

21. (III.) The recognition of the canonical books of the New Testament by Christians and by councils, was not regarded by them as giving any additional authority to these books. It was because they were previously invested with divine authority as the inspired oracles of God that they received them as canonical, and bore witness to them as the sacred Scriptures. And unless they had antecedently possessed this divine authority, the sanction of churches and ecclesiastical councils could not have conferred it.

22. (IV.) How kind and gracious has the Lord been to his church in giving a divinely inspired communication of his will, and in preserving his own oracles to his church, notwithstanding the efforts of his enemies to destroy them! We have in these a perfect and authoritative rule to guide us in the right way, and to conduct us to the possession of life everlasting.

23. With regard to the order of the books of the New Tes-

tament, and the time at which they were written, a few observations will suffice. It is generally admitted that the Gospel of Matthew was written about eight years after the ascension of our Lord, and before that apostle had left Judea to preach the gospel in foreign parts. While the ancients are agreed in opinion that this gospel was originally written in Hebrew, or in that dialect of Hebrew which was spoken by the inhabitants of Judea in the days of our Lord, many learned men in modern times have maintained, that it was written in Greek. In support of this opinion they allege, in the first place, that according to the other supposition, namely, that it was written by Matthew in Hebrew, the original of this gospel is lost, and we have only a translation. But it appears to me, that this conclusion does not necessarily follow from the admission, that this gospel was originally written in the Hebrew language. For, is it not highly probable that this apostle did himself write a version of this gospel in the Greek language, or prepare a version of it in this tongue by some other person under his own superintendence?

24. In the second place, it is considered to be a strong objection to the idea of a Hebrew original of this gospel, that no person whose writings have come down to us, has intimated that he had ever seen this original, and that from the earliest times it seems to have existed in the Greek language. This fact is easily accounted for by supposing that there was a Greek original as well as a Hebrew.

25. In the third place, it is affirmed as an objection to a sole Hebrew original, that the Gospel according to Matthew has no appearance of being a translation, but has the air and style of an original. This, however, is certain, that the Greek of St. Matthew, whether written by himself or not, was not later than the apostolic age, and that it received the sanction of apostles or apostolic men.

26. The preponderating opinion is, that Mark, the penman of the sacred gospel, according to the order of the canon, is the same person who is mentioned in the First Epistle of Peter v. 13. Of this evangelist little is known, except that he travelled with Barnabas; but he seems to have continued with the apostle Peter until his death. The general opinion is, that the gospel which bears the name of this evangelist was composed after St. Peter came to Rome, about the year A.D. 62 or 63. In writing this gospel, so entirely was Mark the amanuensis of



Peter, that among the primitive Christians this gospel was as much known by the name of the Gospel of St. Peter as of Mark. This opinion is confirmed by what Eusebius states out of Papias :—"When Peter," says he, "in the reign of Claudius had come to Rome, and had defeated Simon Magus, the people were so inflamed with love to Christian truths, as not to be satisfied with the hearing of them, unless they also had them written down. Accordingly they, with earnest entreaties, applied themselves to Mark, the companion of Peter, and whose gospel we now have, praying him that he would write down for them an account of the doctrines which had been preached to them; that they did not desist in their request till they had prevailed on him, and procured his writing that which is now the Gospel of Mark; that when Peter came to know this, he was, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, pleased with the request of the people, and confirmed the gospel which was written for the use of the churches." This is the opinion of all the Christian Fathers; and it may be observed that the internal evidence is in accordance with this opinion. For example, the circumstances favourable to Peter which are mentioned by the other evangelists, are not noticed in this gospel.

27. The next gospel in the order of the canon is that of Luke. He was the companion of Paul in his travels, as well as during the two years of his imprisonment in Rome. It is asserted by Irenæus, that Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by him. Tertullian speaks of Matthew and John as disciples of Christ; of Mark and Luke as disciples of the apostles; but he ascribes the same authority to the gospels written by them as to the others. Eusebius has given the following testimony concerning the evangelist Luke :—"Luke, who was of Antioch, and by profession a physician, for the most part a companion of Paul, who had, likewise, more than a slight acquaintance with the other apostles, has left us, in two books, divinely inspired, evidences of the art of healing souls, which he had learned from them. One of them is the gospel which he professeth to have written as they delivered it to him, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." To this I shall only add the testimony of Jerome, who says that Luke, who was of Antioch, and by profession a physician, not unskilful in the Greek language, a disciple of the apostle Paul, and the constant companion of his travels, wrote a gospel, and another

excellent volume, entitled the Acts of the Apostles. It is supposed that Luke did not learn his gospel from the apostle Paul only, who had not conversed with the Lord in the flesh, but also from other apostles, which likewise he owns at the beginning of his volume, saying, "Even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word."

28. This gospel was universally received as canonical by the primitive church. It is mentioned in every catalogue of the books of the New Testament that ever has been published; it is quoted and referred to by the Fathers as a part of the Scriptures which cannot be broken; and it has always been read in the churches as a divinely authoritative rule of faith and practice.

29. I attach no weight to the objections that have been made to the canonical authority of this gospel and that of Mark, because the reception of these books by the whole church, while the apostles were yet living, is to me conclusive evidence of their inspiration and divine authority. Though the penmen were not, strictly speaking, apostles, their writings received the sanction of apostles as sacred Scripture—a proof surely that they were penned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The promise of inspiration and infallible guidance, though given to the twelve, was not confined to them; for the apostle Paul, who wrote so large a part of the New Testament, was not of this number, and yet he possessed the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The testimony of the apostle John, who lived thirty years after these gospels were received as canonical by all the churches, is surely decisive in this matter. The rule of the learned Huet is incontrovertible, "That all those books should be deemed canonical and inspired which were received as such by those who lived nearest to the time when they were published."

30. Even if it were granted, that no books possessed divine and canonical authority but the writings of apostles, the Gospels of Mark and Luke would not be excluded from the canon; for the one was written under the superintendence of Peter, the other under that of Paul. Mark and Luke may be considered as the amanuenses of the apostles on whom they attended. This was so much the opinion of some of the Fathers, that they speak of Mark's Gospel as Peter's, and of Luke's as Paul's.

31. The internal evidence, in as far as that is received as an argument in favour of the canonical authority of any book, is conclusive with regard to these two gospels. I shall sum up my observations on the Gospel according to Luke, in the words of Mr. Townsend. "The Gospel of Luke," says he, "was always, from the very moment of its publication, received as inspired, as well as authentic. It was published during the lives of St. John, St. Peter, and St. Paul, and was approved and sanctioned by them as inspired; and received as such by the churches, in conformity to the Jewish canon, which decided on the genuineness or spuriousness of the inspired books of their own church by receiving him as a prophet, who was acknowledged as such by the testimony of an established prophet. On the same grounds Luke must be considered as a true evangelist, his gospel being dictated and approved by an apostle, of whose authority there can be no question. There is likewise sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusions of Whitby, that both St. Mark and St. Luke were of the number of the seventy, who had a commission from Christ to preach the gospel, not to the Jews only, but to the other nations; that the Holy Ghost fell on these among the number of the seventy, who formed a part of the hundred and twenty assembled on the day of Pentecost; and from that time they were guided by the influences of the Holy Spirit, in writing or preaching the gospel. And if the universal church, from the first ages, received this gospel as divinely inspired, on these satisfactory grounds, distance of time cannot weaken the evidences of truth, and we are required to receive it on the same testimony."

32. The Gospel by John, the fourth in the order of the canonical books of the New Testament, was written by the apostle whose name it bears, who was originally a fisherman of Galilee, the son of Zebedee and Salome. This was the disciple whom Jesus loved with peculiar affection. He was present at the crucifixion; he visited the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection with Peter; and he was present when Christ first appeared to the eleven. When advanced in life, he was an exile in the island of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus. He died at a great age, and was buried near the city of Ephesus.

33. The divine and canonical authority of the Gospel by John is universally admitted. It was written, as is generally supposed, about the year 97. It has been supposed that nearly

the whole of this gospel could be made up from the citations of the writers of the first four centuries.

34. The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke. As the fact has never been questioned, it is unnecessary to prove it by the testimonies of the Fathers. It was written probably about the year 62. Its canonical authority is proved, by its having a place in all the ancient catalogues of the books of the New Testament, and by the numerous citations from it by the early Fathers, who appealed to it as an inspired book.

35. Of the canonical authority of thirteen of the Epistles of Paul, no doubt was ever entertained. But as the Epistle to the Hebrews was published without his name and usual salutation, some conjectured that it was the production of another person. But its canonical authority was at length fully established.

36. With regard to the seven catholic epistles, their divine and canonical authority was admitted. Different reasons have been assigned for the application of the epithet Catholic to these epistles. Some are of opinion, that they were so called because they contained the one catholic doctrine which was delivered by our Lord and Saviour to the churches. Others think that this appellation was given to them because they were not addressed to one person or church, but to the universal or Catholic Church. A third opinion is that the First Epistle of Peter and the first of John, being received by all Christians without exception or limitation, obtained the name of Catholic, to distinguish them from those which at first were not universally received; but in process of time, these last coming to be universally received, were put into the same class with the first, and the whole, thenceforth, had the appellation of Catholic.

37. The evidence for the canonical authority of the Book of Revelation is complete. Until the fourth century it was universally received. But as the Millenarians, who held that Christ will reign visibly with his saints a thousand years, during which period gross and earthly pleasures would be enjoyed, founded their opinions on passages in this book, the Fathers were led not to deny, but to disparage, its value. It was for this reason, and also on account of the mysterious nature of its contents, deemed expedient not to read publicly in churches the Book of Revelation. And as the purpose for which the Fathers and the ancient councils gave catalogues of



the books of sacred Scripture was to guide the people in the reading of them, the Book of Revelation was sometimes omitted.

38. But its authenticity and divine authority stand on evidence which cannot be shaken. It has internal evidence of its divine original, not only in the sublimity, purity, and consistency of its doctrines, but in the prophecies which it contains, which have been fulfilled, and which are now fulfilling. This furnishes abundant and accumulating evidence to the fact, "that this book is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and sent and signified it by an angel to his servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CONTINUED.

1. It appears, then, that the books written by the apostles, or written under their direction and by their sanction, were, from the time of their publication, distinguished by all Christians from all other books. They were received by them, and appealed to, as given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. When they ascertained that they were writings of apostles, they without hesitation received them as a part of that Scripture which cannot be broken, and which is given by inspiration of God. They distinguished them from all other books by such appellations as the Scriptures of the Lord—the Holy Scriptures—the oracles of the Lord.

2. It further appears that these books were read, not by a few individuals, but by the whole Christian community in every part of the world. When they were thus publicly read, it was as the oracles of God; and as such they were distinguished from all other books.

3. In all matters of controversy, their authority was acknowledged and decisive. As for heretics who mutilated the Scriptures, and who forged others for themselves, their opinion is of no value. But even the great majority of them showed great anxiety to derive support to their opinions from the New Testament.

4. It should also be observed, that the avowed enemies of Christianity who wrote against it, recognised the books which

are now in the canon as books which were acknowledged by all Christians as containing the divinely authoritative rule of their faith. Celsus in the second century, Porphyry in the third, and the emperor Julian in the fourth—all bitter enemies of Christianity—refer to the books of the New Testament as genuine and authentic, and received by all Christians as divine.

5. But we are able to prove by these various sources of evidence, not only that the books of the New Testament are genuine and authentic, but that they contained, when they were first published, and were first received by the church, the same things which are read in them now. This is fully proved by the numerous quotations from these sacred books, which are to be found in the writings of the Fathers. It has been supposed, that almost every verse in some books of the New Testament has been cited by one or another of the Fathers; so that if the books were lost, they might be restored, by means of the quotations from them in other books.

6. In addition to this source of evidence, which is quite conclusive of itself, we have versions of the New Testament into various languages, some of which were made very early, and all which so entirely agree that it is manifest they are faithful translations from the original.

7. We have still to observe the existence of thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament, which were written in different ages from the fourth century till the sixteenth. Some of these manuscripts contain all the books of the New Testament; others only a part; and in some cases a single book. But, so far as these manuscripts go, they contain the same books; a proof that the canon was settled by common consent when they were written.

8. When was the canon of Scripture determined? It was determined immediately after the death of St. John, the last survivor of the apostolic order. The canon of the Gospels was indeed determined before his death; for we read in Eusebius, that he gave his sanction to the three other Gospels, and completed this part of the New Testament with his own. By the death of St. John, the catalogue of Scripture was completed and closed. By whom was the canon of Scripture determined? It was determined, not by the decision of any individual, nor by the decree of any council, but by the general consent of the whole and every part of the church. It is indeed a remarkable circumstance, that among the various disputes which

so early agitated the Church, the canon of Scripture was never a subject of controversy. If any question might be said to have arisen, it was in reference to one or two of those books which are included in the present canon; but with respect to those that are out of the canon, no difference of opinion ever existed. The reason of this argument is a very satisfactory one. Whenever an epistle arrived at any particular church, it was first authenticated; it was then read to all the holy brethren, and was subsequently transmitted to some neighbouring church. Thus we find that the authentication of the epistles of Paul was the salutation with his own hand, by which the church to which the epistle was first addressed might be assured that it was not a forgery. To prevent any mistake or fraud, the transmission from one church to another was made by the bishops. Through him official communications were sent from one church to another, even in the remotest countries. The first age of the church was an age of too much vigilance, of too much communication, of too much authority, for any fabrication of Scripture to hope for success. If any attempt was made, it was instantly crushed. When the authority of the apostles and apostolic men had lost its influence, and heresies and disputes had arisen, then it was that forgeries began to appear. Nothing, indeed, but the general and long determined consent of the whole Christian world could have preserved the sacred volume in its integrity, unimpaired by one set of heretics, and unincumbered by the progenies of another.

9. We shall now make a few observations on the apocryphal books that were written in the early ages, or the apocryphal books of the Christian dispensation. Why have these been considered, in some cases, as spurious, and in all as destitute of canonical authority? Let us briefly advert to the principles on which they have been uniformly rejected. The rules laid down by Mr. Jones, by which it may be determined that a book is apocryphal, are the following:—

10. (I.) That book is certainly apocryphal which contains manifest contradictions. This rule is founded on the self-evident principle, that a book given by inspiration of God must be consistent with itself, and consistent with known truth.

11. (II.) That book is apocryphal which contains any doctrine or history plainly contrary to those which are certainly known to be true. This rule is founded on the obvious prin-

ciple, that one part of revelation cannot contradict another; that all truth is consistent with itself.

12. (III.) That book is apocryphal which contains anything ludicrous or trifling, or which abounds in silly and fabulous stories. This rule is founded on the very obvious principle, that in revelation from God there cannot be anything ludicrous or trifling, silly or fabulous. But, by the application of this rule, the books called apocryphal must be rejected.

13. (IV.) That book is apocryphal which mentions things of a date much later than the time in which the author, under whose name it goes, lived. The importance of this rule, and the principles upon which it is founded, are obvious; but it will be better understood by its application to one or two examples. The book entitled the Constitution of the Apostles, speaks of the controversy which arose in the third century respecting the rebaptism of heretics. It cannot, therefore, be the work of Clement of Rome, to whom it has been ascribed. It must have been written at a period subsequent to that with which the controversy alluded to is connected. This is further evident from its mentioning rites and ceremonies which had no existence long after the apostolic age.

14. (V.) That book is apocryphal, the style of which is entirely different from the known style of the author to whom it is ascribed. This rule is founded on the acknowledged fact, that while an author's name, age, country, and opinions, may be counterfeited, his style cannot be successfully imitated. "Jerome," says Sixtus, "writes one way in his Epistles, another in his Controversies, a third in his Commentaries—one way when young, another when old; yet he always writes that you may know him to be the same Jerome still, as a man knows his friend under all the various casts and turns of his countenance." It ought to be observed, at the same time, that this rule ought to be applied with great caution and judgment.

15. (VI.) That book is spurious and apocryphal, whose idiom and dialect are different from those of the country to which the reputed author belonged. Idiom is the peculiarity, not of an individual, but of a language and country. A foreigner, therefore, who acquires the language of a country to which he is a stranger, retains the idiomatic peculiarities of his own. Hence, in the New Testament, though the language be Greek, the idiom is Hebrew—an idiom which the writers had acquired from their infancy, but which could not have been successfully



imitated by any native Greek, nor by any one not early conversant with the vernacular tongue of Palestine at that time. Hence the facility with which the imposture of those might be detected who, while they were men of other countries and other times, published books under the name of the apostles.

16. (VII.) That book is spurious which exhibits a disposition and temper of mind very different from that of the person to whom it is ascribed. This rule proceeds on the supposition that we are acquainted with the disposition and temper of mind of the person to whom any particular book is ascribed. A manifest difference from this is decisive evidence of the spuriousness of the book.

17. (VIII.) Those books which were never cited nor referred to as Scripture by any writer of credit, for the first four hundred years after the apostles' days, are apocryphal.

(IX.) Those books which were expressly rejected by the Fathers of the first ages as spurious, and attributed by them to heretics, are apocryphal.

18. By the aid and application of these rules, it may be shown, that all the books commonly called apocryphal have no just claim to canonical authority. Whatever be their merits and defects, they are mere human compositions, and ought, therefore, to be utterly rejected when set forth as the oracles of God.

19. The ancients divided the apocryphal books into two classes, the ecclesiastical and spurious. The former were the genuine productions of the persons whose names they bore, and some of which were publicly read for edification. Of this description was the Epistle of Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Epistle of Barnabas. In the second, and more particularly in the third century, the spurious and apocryphal writings greatly increased. The chief cause of this was the abounding of heresies; though some of these apocryphal books were doubtless written by weak and pious persons, under the impression that they were thus recommending Christianity.

20. It is unnecessary to take particular notice here of the apocryphal books which are still extant. They have been unanimously and uniformly rejected by the whole Christian Church, as having no claim to a place in the canon.

21. We shall, therefore, proceed to show, that no part of the Christian revelation has been handed down by tradition. This is necessary, since the Roman Catholics maintain, that in addition to the revelation of the will of God contained in the

sacred Scriptures, there is a further revelation, "consisting of such things as were received from the mouth of Christ himself while upon earth, or taught to the churches by his inspired apostles, which were not by them, nor in their time, committed to writing, but which have come down to us by unbroken tradition." This is the claim set up by the Roman Catholics, and it is proper that we should examine the foundation upon which it rests, not only because it is our duty to become acquainted with all the will of God, but because no controversy between us and the Roman Catholics can be decided by a reference to the written oracles of God, until we have proved that in these oracles is exclusively contained a revelation of the will of God. And this, I conceive, is sufficiently proved if there be no satisfactory evidence adduced of the existence of any such traditionary revelation as is supposed; and if it be shown, that it is impossible to ascertain what proceeded from the apostles, and what from the fancy and superstition of men.

22. It is the more necessary to examine narrowly the claim of the Romish Church to this traditionary revelation, since that church finds it a convenient support to all its errors and superstitions. The church, which has the keeping of this oral law, has also the application of it; and therefore the most pernicious tenets, and the most monstrous absurdities, may be supported by a rule of faith so very pliable and convenient. If we only grant this claim of the Romish Church, we must receive with implicit faith whatever that church is pleased to teach. Nor must we presume to trust our own understandings in regard to the declarations of Scripture, since the interpretation of Scripture is to be derived from unwritten traditions, the knowledge of which rests with the head of the church. If a divine warrant can be shown for this exercise of authority over our faith and conscience, it becomes us to submit; but if no such warrant can be adduced—if there be no proof of the divine origin of the alleged unwritten traditions—then we are bound to refuse obedience.

23. We are not to be understood as denying, that a revelation of the will of God, communicated orally, is as binding as if it were written; for it is not the mode in which a revelation from God is communicated, that gives to it authority over our conscience, but the fact of its being a revelation from God. Let the evidence be clear and decisive that God has declared such and such to be his will, and immediate obedience is a

duty. Let a divine revelation be properly authenticated, and all are bound to obey it.

24. Indeed, we have no evidence for maintaining that there existed a written revelation before the time of Moses. The knowledge of the will of God, divinely communicated, was transmitted by tradition. But there were two peculiar circumstances by which that transmission was characterised. First, the longevity of the patriarchs rendered that a comparatively safe channel of communication. But even notwithstanding that circumstance, so favourable to the patriarchal age, divine truth was adulterated, and so corrupted with foreign mixtures, that it became difficult to distinguish it from the errors and fables by which it was surrounded. Secondly, the patriarchal was an age in which God often interposed in a supernatural way, and in which he gave renewed and repeated revelations of his will. It was, therefore, totally dissimilar from the Christian dispensation, in which, since the apostolic age, there are no miraculous interpositions, and no new revelations of the will of God.

25. Whether the opinion of some learned men be well founded, that God taught letters to Moses, for the express purpose of conveying, by this means, his laws to distant ages, without alteration, it is unnecessary here to determine. But of this we are certain, that after Moses, in obedience to the divine command, wrote in a book the laws and statutes which were delivered to him, no part of the revelation of God was transmitted by oral tradition.

26. In support of tradition, it is alleged by the Romanists, that tradition is necessary to establish the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. How do we know, in so far as external testimony is concerned, that the books of the New Testament were written by the persons under whose names they have come down to us, but by tradition and the testimony of the church?

27. The answer to this is, that the point in question, in so far as external testimony is concerned, is decided not by tradition, and not by the testimony of the church as such, but by the testimony of persons, who lived in times and circumstances which rendered them competent witnesses, and gave them the opportunity of obtaining accurate knowledge. The testimony of those who were out of the church, in regard to this matter, is just as valuable as the testimony of those who were members of it. The competency of the witnesses, and

the validity of the evidence, do not depend on the church membership of the persons who bear testimony; for it is the inspiration of the Scriptures, not the testimony of the church, which gives authority to the sacred writings; and all that is necessary to be ascertained is, the fact of their having been the productions of inspired men. If this fact be established by credible testimony, it is all that we are concerned with; and it matters not whether the witnesses be of the church or not.

28. "A sufficient number of competent and credible witnesses, not of the church, would establish the fact just as well as those who have given testimony; and such testimony, on the score of freedom from all partiality, has the advantage. The testimony of Jews and heathens has, on this account, been demanded by infidels, and has been sought for with avidity by the defenders of Christianity, and, in the view of all considerate men, is of great weight. But it is not just to ascribe the authority of these books to the church, because the greater number of the witnesses of their apostolical origin were members of the church. The law enacted by the supreme authority of the state does not owe its authority to the men who attest its genuineness. The Scriptures cannot owe their authority to the church, for, without them, the church can have no authority; and although she may, and does, give ample testimony in favour of their divine origin, this confers no authority on them; it only proves that they have inherent authority, as writings which have been indited by the Spirit of God. It is truly wonderful how this plain case has been perplexed and darkened, by the artifice and sophistry of the writers of the Church of Rome."

29. What, then, is the evidence adduced in proof of the existence of that oral law, or tradition, to which the Romish Church lays claim? What are the arguments by which it is attempted to prove, that it was the purpose of God to permit a part of the revelation intended for the use of the church in all future ages, to be transmitted by tradition?

30. The Council of Trent declared, that it received and venerated traditions relating both to faith and manners, as proceeding from the mouth of Christ himself, or as dictated by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in an uninterrupted succession in the Catholic Church, with equal affection and reverence as the written Scriptures. The arguments by which the Romanists endeavour to prove the existence and authority of these traditions are,



31. (I.) Those declarations of Scripture in which we are exhorted to obey traditions. "Now we command you, brethren," says the apostle Paul, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thess. iii. 6.) The same apostle exhorts, in the preceding chapter, to stand fast, and hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or epistle. Now, the question here is, not whether Paul and the other apostles delivered many things orally to the churches; for before the gospels and epistles were written, all the instructions communicated by these divine messengers were oral; but the true question in dispute is, whether any article of faith, or any divine institution, thus originally communicated, was omitted when the books of the New Testament were written? Was there a part of the revelation of God, intended for the use of his church in all future ages, to be handed down by tradition, while another part was committed to writing? The use of the word tradition by the apostle makes nothing in favour of the affirmative of this question, because by this word he means such things as he had taught the churches, and as were distinctly recorded in the Scriptures. (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.)

32. (II.) Another argument is derived from the declarations of the Fathers in favour of tradition. In various parts of their writings, they speak with commendation of tradition. Irenæus, in the third chapter of his book on heresies, says, "The tradition of the apostles is manifest in the whole world. In the church, it is exposed to the view of all who are willing to know the truth." And in the fourth chapter he says, "It is not necessary to seek the truth from others, which can easily be acquired from the church, since the blessed apostles have deposited in her, most fully, all those truths which are needful, so that every one who will may drink of the water of life. This is the true door of life; those things which appertain to the church we should delight in with great diligence, and should lay hold of the tradition of truth. For what if the apostles had left us no writings, ought we not to follow the order of traditions, which they, to whom the churches were committed, have delivered to us? To which institution, many barbarous nations have submitted, having neither letters nor ink, but having the traditions of the apostles inscribed on their hearts." "All doctrine," says Tertullian, "which agrees with that held

by the apostolic churches, is to be considered as true, and held fast, because the churches received it from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God; but all other doctrine which is repugnant to that received by the churches, should be rejected as false, as being repugnant to that truth taught by the apostles, by Christ, and by God."

33. In regard to these and similar declarations by the early Fathers, we may remark that they attached a meaning to the use of the word tradition very different from that which it denotes as used by the Romish Church. They appeal to tradition, not for confirmation of articles of faith, and rites of worship, which are not sanctioned by Scripture, but in defence of the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament. Because they sought to strengthen the evidence for the leading doctrines of the Christian Scriptures, by a reference to the truths which the apostles had orally taught, it by no means follows that Roman Catholics are authorized or warranted to prove that other doctrines, not contained in the Scriptures, may be established by tradition. The cases are totally dissimilar, and therefore the one furnishes no example or rule for the other.

34. But if the sole object of the Fathers in appealing to tradition was to confirm doctrines established by the Scriptures, it may be asked why, in place of referring to tradition, did they not at once appeal to the Scriptures? To this question the answer is this:—That the Fathers in their appeals to apostolic tradition were dealing with heretics, who had either rejected the Scriptures as being an insufficient rule for the decision of controversy, or who had so corrupted them that it was useless to appeal to them for proof. The correctness of this view is confirmed by Irenæus, who says, "When they are confuted from the Scriptures themselves, they allege that they are not correct, or not of authority, and assert that they speak so variously, that the truth cannot be established by them without tradition; for, say they, it was handed down, not by letters, but *viva voce*." "They (that is the heretics) pretend," says Tertullian, "that the apostles did not wish to reveal all things plainly; for while they made known certain truths to all, there were others, which they communicated secretly and to a few persons, which, they say, the apostle Paul meant by the *depositum*."

35. It thus appears, that the reason why these Fathers had recourse to tradition was, that the heretics, like the Romanists,

denied that the Scriptures are a certain and sufficient standard of truth; alleging that they are defective, and that their meaning cannot be ascertained without that tradition which was designedly handed down. The Fathers contended that apostolic tradition, in so far as it could be ascertained, was in accordance with Scripture. They did not attempt, like the Romanists, to prove by tradition doctrines which are not in the Bible, but they made use of it merely for the purpose of confirming truths which are contained in the New Testament. They did so, not because the testimony of Scripture was insufficient to establish these truths, but because they were disputing with men who did not admit the authority of Scripture to be decisive. At the same time, they maintained that apostolical tradition did not sanction the errors of heretics, but was in entire accordance with the doctrines of the New Testament. Speaking of the faith of the barbarous nations that had received the gospel, Irenæus says, "Believing in one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and all things which are therein; and in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who for his exceeding great love to his creatures, submitted to be born of a virgin, by himself uniting man to God; and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and having risen again, was received into heaven; about to come again in glory; the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged; and will send into eternal fire the perverters of the truth, and the despisers of his Father, and of his coming; which barbarians, if any one should announce to them the doctrines invented by heretics, stopping their ears, they would fly far away from them. Thus, the ancient apostolical tradition does not sanction those monstrous opinions inculcated by heretics." "The church," says he, "planted by the apostles and their disciples throughout the whole world, even to the end of the earth, receives the same faith. This faith, the church spread over the whole world diligently keeps, as if she inhabited one house, and believers in it as if possessing but one soul and one heart; and in accordance with the same, she teaches and preaches as with one mouth. Although the languages which are in the world are different, yet there is one and the same *tradition*. Neither do the churches which are founded in Germany believe differently from those in Italy, nor from those among the Celts, nor from those in the east, nor from those which are in Egypt, or Lybia, or in the middle of the world.

But as the sun is one and the same through the whole world, so the light and preaching of the truth everywhere shines, and illuminates all men who are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth."

36. These observations make it evident that the early Fathers meant by apostolic tradition, not any secret doctrine which had not been committed to writing, not any truths, or rites of worship, to which there is no allusion in the Bible, but the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity as taught in the written word of God. The theme of the apostolic preaching was the theme of the apostolic writings; the truths conveyed by preaching were the same as the truths conveyed by writing; and what the apostles delivered orally was in accordance with what, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they committed to writing.

37. The history of the early church proves that the discussion about tradition was occasioned by the attacks of heretics on Scripture. The church in the second century, the age of heretics, took up the argument in defence of truths contained in Scripture; and agreed thus:—"We have received what was delivered to us by the inspired apostles, first verbally, and then by the Scriptures, which contain the things most surely believed among us. The tradition of the Lord and of his inspired apostles is handed down to us in Scripture; and to that we appeal." Accordingly Cyprian says, "They who are vanquished by reason oppose to us custom, as if custom were greater than truth, or that was not to be followed in spiritual things which was revealed by the Holy Spirit." What the Fathers meant, then, by tradition, was that all the preaching of the apostles was now deposited in Scripture, which, whosoever receives, has the genuine apostolical tradition. This is totally different from the modern invention; a something called tradition which cannot be brought to light, and which is made use of to sanction rites, ceremonies, articles of faith, and priestly power; a mere phantom to which is attributed an authority co-ordinate at least with the word of God.

38. (III.) In support of their traditions the Romanists argue, that there were some things not expressly mentioned in Scripture which the Fathers inculcated, and which are received by all true Christians. These are, infant baptism and the religious observance of the first day of the week as the Sabbath, in place of the seventh.



39. To this we answer, that we receive these institutions, not on the authority of tradition, but because they were sanctioned by the example of apostles, and also because they are fairly deducible from the declarations of the word of God. We admit, that the fact of their universal observance in the primitive church strengthens our convictions of the accuracy of our inferential reasonings from Scripture in regard to these institutions. At the same time, we maintain that we observe them as divinely instituted ordinances, not on the authority of tradition, but on that of the Scriptures. It was on this ground that the Fathers themselves received them; for they appealed for their truth to the New Testament. Irenæus, Origen, Augustine, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, do all appeal to Scripture when treating this subject, that is, infant baptism.

40. We admit, indeed, that after the lapse of time undue deference was paid to tradition; and as the effect, the minds of men were turned away from the simplicity of the gospel. Errors were thus adopted in place of truth, and a burdensome ritual was substituted in room of the ordinances of God. With this fact in our view, why should we be bound to receive as articles of faith, or parts of divine worship, all that the Fathers received from tradition? The Romish Church itself does not receive all that these Fathers received from tradition. Our principle is—the principle of Protestants—that the Scriptures alone form the rule of faith; and that whatever is not contained there, we are not only not bound to receive, but, if presented in the form of an article of religion, bound to reject. We thankfully receive light in explaining the Scriptures, from whatever quarter it may come, whether it be derived from tradition or from the universal practice and opinion of the primitive church; but our faith must rest not on the opinions or practices of fallible men, but on the infallible oracles of God in his written word. To build upon tradition would be to build on the mass of accumulated errors and superstitions of many generations. If even in the purest ages, those nearest the days of the apostles, great uncertainty attended the things received by tradition, what confidence can be placed in it after it has been flowing in a channel, often very impure, during seventeen hundred years? Is it not a fact, attested by history, that as early as the second century rites were adopted into the worship of the Christian Church on the ground of expediency,

with the view of recommending Christianity to the heathen? Apart from the Scriptures, how can we distinguish what was adopted on this principle, from that which was handed down from apostolic tradition?

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, CONTINUED—TRADITION—INSPIRATION.

1. I HAVE adduced three of the arguments of the Romanists in favour of tradition; and I now mention (IV.) that another of their arguments is, That without the aid of tradition, the Scriptures will be of no real benefit to us, because it is only by this means that we can arrive at their true meaning.

2. It will be readily observed that this argument is a mere gratuitous assumption. But even though we were to concede what is here assumed, the main point in dispute, namely, the right of the Romish Church to prescribe articles of faith and rites of worship on the sole ground and authority of apostolic tradition, would remain untouched. All that is claimed by the present argument is, that the true interpretation of Scripture can be known only by tradition. In regard to this argument, I notice,

3. First, That there are many things in Scripture so plain, as not to require any interpretation or comment. Such are the doctrines concerning the fall of man, the mission of Christ, his atonement, resurrection, and glorious ascension to heaven. How can these elementary truths of the Bible be made clearer than they are there?

4. Secondly, There are some parts of the New Testament which tradition does not profess to explain. The Book of Revelation is admitted by the Romish Church to be canonical; but tradition gives no interpretation of the prophecy of that book.

5. Thirdly, Tradition, as it has been transmitted to us from the Fathers, is a very unsafe guide for the interpretation of the Scriptures, because it is admitted that the Fathers themselves, notwithstanding tradition, fell into many mistakes. And,

6. Fourthly, Tradition is a very unsafe guide to follow in the interpretation of Scripture, because we cannot ascertain from the Fathers what that interpretation is which was received from the apostles. Are the allegorical interpreta-

tions of Origen to be received as those of inspired teachers? Where is the tradition to be found which is to be an infallible guide in the interpretation of Scripture? Where is it recorded? How has it been transmitted? If the church was the depository, how can we be sure that this deposit was purely kept when Origenism was predominant, and when ignorance and barbarism prevailed? On the supposition that an oral law exists, furnishing an infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture, how, it may be asked, have there been so many dissensions about doctrine in the Church of Rome itself?

7. Fifthly and lastly, the danger of relying on tradition, and making it the rule of our faith in place of the written word of God, is evident from the history of heretics. They have usually appealed from Scripture to tradition, and have derived from this source support to their most pernicious errors. Even good men, such as Irenæus, Tertullian, and Lactantius, were misled by reliance on traditions. Indeed, there is much reason to believe that the corruption of the church was owing to a disposition, which began early to be indulged, of lending too credulous an ear to traditions.

8. We conclude, therefore, that the Scriptures alone, without any oral law or tradition, are a sufficient rule of faith; and that we ought not to receive as articles of faith, or institutions of worship, anything but what is clearly taught in the written oracles of God.

9. I cannot conclude these observations on the canon of Scripture more appropriately than in the words of a distinguished divine. "The assertion, that the question of the canon is not a point of revelation, is false. It is not true either of the Old Testament or of the New. The integrity of the canon of the Old Testament is a matter of revelation, as much as anything contained in the Bible. This is attested, as has been shown, by the whole nation of the Jews, to whom it was committed; and their fidelity to the truth has been avouched by the Lord and his apostles. Is not this revelation? The integrity of the canon of the New Testament is equally a point of revelation. As God had said to the Jews, 'Ye are my witnesses,' and as they received the lively oracles to give to us, so the Lord Jesus said to the apostles, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.' The first churches received the New Testament Scriptures from

these witnesses of the Lord, and thus had inspired authority for those books. It was not left to erudition or reasoning to collect that they were a revelation from God. The assertion that the question of the canon is a point of erudition, not of divine revelation, is subversive of the whole of revelation. We have no way of knowing that the miracles related in Scripture were wrought, and that the doctrines inculcated were taught, but by testimony and the internal evidence of the books themselves. We have the evidence of miracles, as that evidence comes to us by the testimony which vouches the authenticity of the inspired books. As far as the genuineness and authenticity of any book are brought into suspicion, so far is everything contained in it brought into suspicion. There can be no evidence that the doctrines of Scripture are revealed truths, unless we are certain that the books of Scripture are revelation. If the books which compose the canon are not matter of revelation, then we have no revelation. Were not the canon a matter of divine revelation, the whole Bible would be stripped of divine authority. Anything, therefore, that goes to unsettle the canon, goes to unsettle every doctrine contained in the canon.

10. "If it should be asked, Should we be precluded from inquiring into the grounds on which the canon is received? it is replied, Certainly not. But we should remember that the permanent ground on which it stands is testimony; and such must be the ground of every historical fact. Internal evidence may confirm the authenticity of a book sanctioned by the canon, but to suspend belief till we receive such confirmation argues an ignorance of the principles of evidence. If, in a book recognised by the canon, as the Song of Solomon, we find matter which to our wisdom does not appear to be worthy of inspiration, we may be assured that we mistake; for if, that book is authenticated by testimony as a part of the sacred Scriptures which the Lord Jesus Christ sanctioned, it is authenticated by a first principle, to which God has bound us by the constitution of our nature, to submit."\*

11. It may, probably, be expected that I should notice the internal evidence as furnishing proof of the canonical authority of the sacred Scriptures.

I refer the reader to the Sixth and Seventh Books, in which the internal evidence is treated at great length.

\* Haldane's Evidence, &c., of Divine Revelation, pp. 150—157.



## BOOK IX.

ON THE PLENARY INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

1. THE opposition to the divine authority of Christianity has called forth the efforts of able and learned men in its defence. Middleton, Bolingbroke, Mandeville, Chubb, Toland, Collins, Woolston, Hume and Gibbon, led Clarke to inquire into the truths on which all religion depends; Warburton to demonstrate the divine legation of Moses; Lardner to accumulate the proofs of the credibility of the gospel; Butler to investigate the analogy of natural and revealed religion; Berkley, Sherlock, Lyttelton, Campbell, and many others, to set forth the evidences of divine revelation.

2. It may be true that, during the period in which these distinguished men lived, English theology was remarkable for its timidity and coldness. It may be true that the Tillotsons and Seckers of a later age were distrustful alike of their readers and of themselves; that they were tame, cautious, and correct; and that they can hardly be said to have contributed so largely as Steele and Addison to guide the opinions or to form the character of their generation. But let us not forget the great obligations of Christians to the great and distinguished men who employed their talents, ably and successfully, in defence of the gospel, and who have bequeathed to us in their writings a valuable legacy.

3. The Scriptures claim to be received as a revelation from God, in consideration of the evidence furnished in confirmation of their divine authority. We are required to believe, as the result of conviction; and the proofs designed to produce this conviction are varied and numerous. It is a marked characteristic of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, that they form the only religion that has ever claimed to have been attended in its first publication with the evidence of miracles. No one will allege that paganism, in any of its

numerous forms, was so founded. Mahommed openly and frequently disclaimed such evidences. He frankly owned that he had no commission nor power to work miracles, being sent of God to the people only as a preacher. Not, indeed, but that there are things mentioned in the revelation which he pretended to give them, which, if true, would have been miraculous; such are the nocturnal visits of the angel Gabriel—his getting from time to time parcels of the uncreated book transmitted to him from heaven—and his most amazing night journey. But these miracles could be no evidence of his mission. Why? Because no person was witness to them.

4. It may be affirmed, then, as an incontrovertible truth, that the religion of the Bible is the only religion which claims to have been recommended by the evidence of miracles; that though, in different ages and countries, numberless enthusiasts have arisen, extremely few have dared to advance this plea; and that wherever any have had the boldness to recur to it, it has proved the bane, and not the support of their cause. This circumstance gives rise to a strong presumption in favour of the truth of the religion of the Bible; such a presumption, in regard to its divine authority, as gives it a claim to the serious attention of every man. Its teachers exhibit credentials of their commission, as sent from God, which no other men with similar pretensions have ever been able to show; and they invite all to examine these evidences of their high office with the most conscientious fidelity.

5. Further, the information contained in the Bible is such as the ignorance and wants of mankind render most peculiarly desirable, and such as the holiness and goodness of God would lead us to expect he would communicate. This topic has been fully illustrated when we treated of the Internal Evidence of Divine Revelation; but I merely announce it here on account of its important bearing on the general question. It is a pledge to us that there is nothing in the volume itself opposed to the principle of its being a communication from the Almighty; but that, on the contrary, it is such a communication as, from all our prior views and anticipations, we should have been led to expect.

6. With the same view I notice the peculiar spirit that pervades the sacred writings. While the subjects are various, the spirit throughout is the same. There is a constant reference to God in the various relations which he sustains to the

universe; and man is ever regarded as responsible to the divine government for his thoughts and actions. The character of God is delineated\*as a combination of all possible excellence; and he is represented in his laws, ordinances and procedure, in consistency with this glorious character. The tendency of Scripture, from this spirit which throughout pervades it, is to elevate human nature in all moral excellence; to lead mankind to do justly, love mercy, and to exercise mutual forbearance and forgiveness; and to diffuse peace and happiness over the world. Whence could so divine a spirit proceed—a spirit which animated all the writers of sacred Scripture, who were not cotemporaries, but who succeeded each other during the term of fifteen hundred years, and whose education, habits, natural dispositions, profession and rank in life, were various,—whence could so divine a spirit proceed but from God, the Fountain of all excellence? Could wicked men have breathed such a spirit, or would they have written a book which condemned their conduct? Could good men have ascribed their own inventions to the Spirit of God, while they themselves reprobated such forgeries, and declared that their authors incurred the wrath of the Almighty?

7. Another observation which I would make on this subject is, the wonderful simplicity, and total absence of desire to produce effect, characteristic of the sacred writings. In the narration of events, where it may be affirmed, from what we know of human nature, it would have been impossible for an ordinary writer to abstain from giving a comment, we meet with no embellishment, no enlargement with the view of increasing the effect, and no such impassioned representation as the occasion might seem to warrant. While there is indicated throughout a deep sense of the infinite importance of the truths which the sacred writers record, there is an entire absence of the turbulence of human passion—a withdrawal of themselves in the simple statement of their subject: this they present to the reader without colouring, without elaborate elucidation, and without any expression of wonder. It was so ordered that the impression which was to be made, should owe nothing to the skill, but everything to the veracity of the writers. We behold nothing like studied panegyric on the character of the great Personage, whose kingdom and glories are the burden of their narrative. They record the most stupendous events, without mingling with the history a

single expression of their own admiration. While they tell us that Jesus wept, there is no appeal made to the sympathy of the reader. While they mention that he is betrayed, they do not expatiate on the enormity of the crime, and on the wickedness and guilt of the traitor. To the words, he is condemned, they do not subjoin a comment on the iniquity of the sentence. While they state the fact of the crucifixion, they make no remark on the awful event for the purpose of showing their own sorrow, and awakening the feelings of the reader. They merely relate the supernatural darkness, the earthquake, the rending of the veil of the temple, and the graves giving up their dead. They merely record the circumstances which accompanied the death of their Master.

8. The sacred writers unite to the most perfect artlessness and simplicity, uniform dignity and authority—such dignity and authority as we might expect from men who were conscious of the truth and importance of the facts which they were commissioned to record, and the doctrines they were directed to promulgate. They are, throughout, consistent; and in the varied circumstances in which they are presented to our view, they spake as it became the servants of the Most High God, who showed unto man the way of salvation. While they inculcate the most respectful deference to rulers and magistrates, they never conciliate their favour by a softening of their message; and though they frankly acknowledge their personal unworthiness, they maintain, in every situation, a tone of authority corresponding to the nature of their office. To their message, they prefixed the solemn words, “Thus saith the Lord.” “By manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

9. The most perfect consistency and correspondence pervade the sacred writings. The spirit and manner are not only the same; but there is an entire accordancy in the subject. While there is diversity of style, the same design is kept in view from the commencement till the close of the sacred volume; and though the topics which are noticed and illustrated are numerous, the sentiments fully agree with each other. All the parts are admirably united, and form one great plan.

This is the more remarkable, as the Scriptures were written by persons not only of different natural acquirements and



characters, but whose external circumstances were extremely diversified. While this diversity, as to the education, talents, and circumstances of the writers, has given rise to a corresponding diversity of manner, the pervading spirit, the great plan, the doctrines and sentiments, are the same. Though the writers lived in different ages, and under different dispensations; though their writings relate to numerous and various subjects; yet they are all most perfectly consistent with each other, all lead to the same grand conclusion, and all unite in forming one great scheme. This exact agreement is the more remarkable, as it was altogether unstudied on the parts of the writers. While each was executing the task assigned to himself, he was ignorant of the part allotted to others; and often of the ultimate end of even what he himself was required to accomplish. The general plan was carried on by agents who succeeded one another during the term of fifteen hundred years; whose education, habits, natural disposition, genius, and rank of life, were various; and, therefore, must all have drawn from one common source, and have been taught and directed by one and the same Spirit. The sacred volume is composed by a great variety of persons, in very different external circumstances, and of every rank and condition. The monarch and the plebeian, the orator and the poet, the historian and the legislator, the learned and the unlearned, had each his peculiar part to perform, and all of them tally with the most perfect agreement. The ordinary methods of imposture were here of necessity excluded. This entire harmony, without previous concert and design—this uniformity without contrivance—form a species of evidence in favour of the Scriptures peculiar to themselves, and which, the more it is considered, cannot fail to leave the impression on the mind, that they have been given by the immediate inspiration of God.

10. Yet, notwithstanding of this uniformity and perfect consistency, there is great diversity in the manner, style, and even language. The Bible, which is a revelation of the will of God, and designed for all ages and nations, if, indeed, it be from God, must have been written not in the language peculiar to man in his rude or civilized state, but in the language common to him both in a state of civilization and comparative rudeness. This holy Book, if it be what it claims to be, will have many of its doctrines revealed by signs and symbols—much of the exalted blessedness to which it leads held forth by typical

representations—and the character and experience of its disciples presented to us in striking and living examples. It is in this mode that we might reasonably expect that the God of infinite wisdom would make known his will to mankind.

11. This conclusion from prior reasoning is accordant with fact. The Bible, while it has the character of unity, as a revelation from God, has in it great diversity, as having been written in different ages, and as containing the varieties of different compositions. It has the simplicity of historical narration, the bold and figurative style of poetry, and the ease and familiar allusions of epistolary correspondence. The doctrines which in some parts it teaches by signs, it elsewhere communicates in language the most obvious; and the same sublime discoveries which prophets convey in the most glowing diction, apostles announce with artless simplicity. This variety was designed by divine wisdom, because a revelation from Heaven, intended as it is for all people, must be adapted to the varying circumstances of men in all ages and nations. While it addresses itself to man, as it were, in all his faculties and feelings, and in all the diversified situations which he can occupy in the revolution of ages, it keeps continually in view the great object of a dispensation of mercy, the recovery of the fallen from the guilt and power of sin, and renovation after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.

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## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES: THE OLD TESTAMENT— THE SCRIPTURES IN GENERAL.

1. THE inspiration and divine authority of the Scriptures form a subject of the highest importance; and all who are concerned that their faith should not rest on the wisdom of man, but on the power of God, will feel disposed to give every argument by which it may be illustrated and proved their most serious attention. Besides the considerations to which I have already alluded, there are others well fitted to strengthen the conviction, that all Scripture contained in the Old and New Testaments is given by inspiration of God.

2. When we prove the inspiration of the New Testament, the inspiration of the Old Testament follows of course; since the writers of the former invariably acknowledged the divine

origin of the latter, and affirmed that Christianity was only the accomplishment of its prophecies, and the development of its typical institutions. It is in reference to them, chiefly, that they declare that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and it is to them our Lord alludes when he says, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me." Our Lord and his apostles were so far from charging the Jews with having introduced into the sacred volume any merely human compositions, that, on the contrary, they not only recommend a diligent and constant perusal of these Scriptures, as of the greatest importance to men's eternal happiness, but speak of them as divine oracles, and as written by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of the writers.

3. All the books of the Old Testament were included in three classes by the Jews, namely, the Law, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings: to this division our Lord alludes, while he gives the sanction of his authority to the inspiration of all these Scriptures: "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me." In these words, there is an explicit acknowledgment of the inspiration of each of the books of the Old Testament; from many of which there are quotations in the Gospels and Epistles, introduced by the title, the Scripture. There cannot be a stronger recognition of the divine authority of the Jewish Scriptures than that which is contained in the words of our Lord, when he says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The same sanction is given to the truth and divine authority of the writings of Moses and the prophets, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where our Lord represents Abraham as saying to the rich man concerning his brethren, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." On another occasion our Lord said to the Jews, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe in my words?"

4. Our Lord, while he opposed oral traditions, and did not

once quote the books of the Apocrypha, some of which were then extant, referred only to the writings which were received by the Jews as the word of God; and thus, by his repeated attestations, established the divine inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. Besides his frequent allusions to the Books of Moses, and his quotations from them, he refers to the Books of Samuel, of the Kings, and the Chronicles, as the word of God; and he thus authenticated those historical narratives as genuine, and attested the miracles recorded in them. From the Book of Psalms also he made repeated quotations, and characterised the whole "as the Scripture which cannot be broken." Why could it not be broken, but because it is the word of God? He expressly refers to Isaiah, to Hosea, to Jonah, to Micah, and to Malachi; and he gives his attestation to all the prophets by declaring that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the prophets, as well as in the law of Moses, and in the psalms concerning him. "Indeed, all those passages in which Christ speaks of his sufferings, death, and resurrection, with the various circumstances connected with them, as what must be, with reference to the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, prove, as far as men regard his testimony, that not one tittle of those sacred books could pass away till the whole had received its full accomplishment; for which no other satisfactory reason can possibly be given except this, that the whole is a divine revelation; 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'"

5. To all those who are convinced of the divine authority of the New Testament, this testimony to the Old as the inspired word of God is decisive. It was no more possible for the writers of the New Testament to have erred in giving this testimony, than to have been mistaken in publishing the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion; and their declarations, in the one case as well as in the other, are to be considered as the dictates of the Holy Ghost. They affirm, that not only a part, but the whole of the canonical books as received by the Jews, were given by inspiration of God; that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope;" that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."



6. But independently of the testimony of the writers of the New Testament, the inspiration and divine authority of the books of the Old Testament Scriptures may be satisfactorily proved. If we admit the genuineness and authenticity of the books ascribed to Moses, points which have been already established, it must also be admitted that he received a commission from God to be a deliverer, a legislator, and a prophet to Israel. But the fulfilment of this divine commission implied and required supernatural influence and inspiration. He could not have forced the reluctant consent of Pharaoh to the departure of Israel, nor have guided that people through the wilderness in the manner in which the history describes him to have done, unless he had been the immediate instrument of the almighty power of God. He could not have communicated the doctrines which his writings contained, and the commandments which he enjoined, without the inspiration of Heaven. It is unnecessary to say, that the numerous prophecies which he delivered, and which have been fulfilled, and are fulfilling at the present day, furnish the strongest attestation of his having spoken as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. These fully establish his claim to the prophetic character; and, in union with the numerous miracles which he performed, furnish the highest assurance that the whole of what he delivered in the name of God was written under the superintendence, and by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit. Having been supernaturally enabled to attest his divine commission by miracles of power and knowledge, what stronger proof could have been given that he was under infallible guidance in revealing the will of God?

7. He himself laid claim to inspiration. He affirmed that the doctrines and the commandments which he delivered to the Israelites were immediately from God, and the direct communication of his mind and will. The words which he uttered are said to be the words which the Lord commanded Moses to deliver to the children of Israel; and he asserted his divine commission and inspiration in the following terms:—"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me." "The Lord commanded me to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them." "The Lord will rejoice over thee for good, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God to keep his commandments

and statutes which are written in this book of the law." In these declarations there is a claim to inspiration in its fullest extent. If we admit the integrity and veracity of Moses—and these are placed beyond a doubt by his whole character, by the exercise of the miraculous gifts which he unquestionably possessed, and by the doctrines and precepts which he taught—we must believe that he was the inspired messenger of Heaven, empowered to reveal, without mistake or error, the will of God.

8. This claim was fully admitted when it was made, and it has been admitted ever since, by the whole body of the Jewish nation. They, in consequence, received as of divine authority the five books which Moses wrote; notwithstanding of the burdensome rites which they prescribed, and the purity, both in regard to worship and to practice, which they enjoined. Some of the duties which Moses commanded implied and required the miraculous interposition of Providence to enable the Jewish people to persevere in their observance; and, consequently, exhibit a standing and unequivocal proof that their great legislator and prophet spake by the immediate and infallible inspiration of God. All the males were commanded to repair thrice every year to Jerusalem, and thus to leave the extraordinary providence of God to preserve their country from the incursions of its enemies. They were also required, once in every seven years, and two years together at the Jubilee, to let their lands be fallow. Yet Israel received the books as of divine authority which contained these and other extraordinary injunctions; and their unhesitating reception of them, in this character, may surely be regarded as a proof that such works had been performed by Moses in their presence, as fully assured them that in all which he taught he was under the infallible direction of God. The continuous train of miracles which he wrought left them no room to doubt the character which he sustained, as a divine messenger; and they felt themselves bound, as we also do, to receive from the ambassador of Heaven, as equally true and authoritative, everything which he delivers in the name of God, whether law, history, doctrine, or prediction.

9. I have only further to remark, with regard to the inspiration of the Books of Moses, that this was fully established by the testimony of a long-continued series of prophets, who affirmed the divine origin of that dispensation of which Moses was the founder, and in connexion with which they exercised the prophetic office. We have therefore the testimony of

numerous and divinely accredited witnesses to the fact, that Moses acted by commission from God. I call them divinely accredited witnesses, not only on account of the miracles which many of them wrought in attestation of their character, but because of the fulfilment of the prophecies which they delivered. Their acknowledgment of the divine authority of the Mosaic writings, and of the Mosaic economy, is to be viewed as the dictate of the Holy Ghost, as much as any other truth which they uttered.

10. The inspiration of the Books of Moses being established, that of the other historical, devotional, and prophetical writings of the Old Testament, appears to me to follow as a consequence. These books were composed, as is believed, by men who possessed the prophetical spirit. The divine authority of many of them was confirmed by the accomplishment of the predictions contained in them. They were received as the oracles of God by the Jewish people, "who having already in their possession genuine inspired books, were the better able to judge of others which advanced a claim to inspiration; and who, we have reason to think, far from being credulous with respect to such a claim, or disposed precipitately to recognise it, proceeded with deliberation and care in examining all pretensions of this nature, and rejected them when not supported by satisfactory evidence. They had been forewarned that false prophets should arise, and deliver their own fancies in the name of the Lord; and while they were thus put upon their guard, they were furnished with rules to assist them in distinguishing a true from a pretended revelation. We have a proof that the ancient Jews exercised a spirit of discrimination in this matter, at a period, indeed, later than that to which we refer, in their conduct with respect to the apocryphal books; for although they were written by men of their own nation, and assumed the names of the most eminent personages, Solomon, Daniel, Ezra, and Baruch, yet they rejected them as human compositions. The testimony, then, of the Jews, who, without a dissenting voice, have asserted the inspiration of the books of the Old Testament, authorizes us to receive them as those oracles of God which were committed to their care."

11. Before concluding these remarks on the evidence of the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, I shall notice a most decisive proof arising from the Epistle to the Hebrews. No reasonable doubt can be entertained that that most com-

prehensively instructive portion of the New Testament was written by the apostle Paul. But in place of having enforced, by his apostolic authority, the truth which he communicated, according to his usual manner when addressing the churches composed of converts from the Gentiles, he waives the sanction of his apostleship, probably on account of the prejudices which many of the Jews entertained against him, and confirmed his statements by constant references to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The apostle by this procedure clearly proves, in the first place, that the inspiration and divine authority of these Scriptures were fully admitted by the Jews; and secondly, that their belief in these was perfectly accordant with truth. He thus certified, in a manner peculiarly solemn, that the writings of which the Old Testament is composed are on a level as to authority with those of the New; that both are to be received as dictated by the same Holy Spirit; and that, as one connected and harmonious whole, they form an infallible standard of divine truth.

12. The Bible itself furnishes ample and convincing proof of its heavenly origin. I shall not here advert to the unparalleled sublimity of the sentiments and representations which it contains, because it may be alleged that this is a matter of taste, a kind of proof which will not reach the understandings of all, and where an affirmation may be met by a denial. But I shall briefly notice some of the contents of the Scriptures, as furnishing satisfactory evidence of their having proceeded from the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.

13. I shall not here enter on the sublime scheme of prophecy which it unfolds, which commences with the beginning of time, and which extends to the consummation of all things; which embraces the grand outline of the history of the world and of the Christian Church till time shall be no more. Such a scheme, apart from all other evidence, indubitably attests the truth and divine authority of the Book of which it forms so prominent and large a proportion. It is a standing memorial and pledge to every age, that the omniscient God who sees the end from the beginning, has guided by the infallible inspiration of his Holy Spirit the writers of the Bible.

14. Besides this, we have all the evidence which arises from the character of the Saviour, from the peculiar circumstances



and history of his apostles; from the lives of his early disciples; from the unquestionable integrity and veracity of the writers of the New Testament; from the suitableness of the blessings which Christianity actually provides to the moral and spiritual necessities of mankind; from its holy tendency and mighty efficacy in meliorating the character of individuals and of society: from these, and from many other topics connected with the interior of Christianity, there arises a body of evidence which is sufficient to prove the truth of the apostle's affirmation, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

15. Consider, in the first place, the representations which it gives of the character and moral government of God. These form a contrast to all human compositions, and especially to such compositions as do not derive whatever excellency they possess from the Bible. In them all the weakness of man appears, prone to mistake and error, and, in his endeavour to avoid one extreme, to run to the opposite. There is nothing of this to be found in the Scriptures. On the contrary, when we read them with attention, we feel that the spirit which is breathed in them throughout is heavenly; that we are in the presence of a Being who is infinitely perfect, holy, just, and good, the Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign Proprietor and Lord of all things, and who is exalted Head over all. We are there taught that it is in him we and all dependent beings live, and move, and have our existence; that to every particle of matter he has given its formation, no less than to the numerous planetary worlds that he guides through the immensity of space; that of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; and that to him are due all praise and glory for ever. We have thus presented to our view a Being of unrivalled excellence, who is entitled to the supreme homage and obedience of every intelligent creature, and who commands all to make his will the rule, and his glory the ultimate end of all their actions. It is to this divine Book that mankind owe whatever just apprehensions they entertain of God, of his being, attributes, government, laws, and of the worship which is due to him. It is for this reason that the most ignorant Christian, as has been justly remarked, knows more of God, of true religion, and of moral obligations, than the most knowing pagan that ever lived. The inhabitants of the heathen world were, as to the native powers of reason, not inferior to us who enjoy the light of the gospel; and the invisible things of God

which are clearly seen from the creation of the world, they might have perceived in the book of nature as well as we. Yet their notions of the first principles of religion were obscure and erroneous; darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. The Bible has removed from us this darkness; through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the ways of peace.

16. Consider, in the second place, the representations which the Scripture affords of the character of Christ. His character is perfectly peculiar and divine, and it was impossible for the human mind, unaided by supernatural influence, to have conceived it before it was described in the sacred volume. The properties which are attributed to Christ are of a very extraordinary nature; those which are characteristic of proper divinity, and such as belong to real though sinless humanity. He is exhibited on all occasions, and throughout a great diversity of scenes, as perfectly pure, unerring in wisdom, boundless in power, unfailing in kindness and compassion; uniting in himself the dominion and majesty of the Deity with all the virtues of unfallen man. The character which he sustained, amid the vast variety of circumstances through which he passed, is exactly that of a Person who is divine, and yet human, who though in the form of God took upon himself the form of a servant, and who was God manifest in the flesh.

17. His character, be it remembered, was drawn by men who were destitute of human literature, who possessed not naturally extraordinary genius or talents, and who had no model to follow in any individual that ever lived in any country or nation. To account for their success we must not only admit that "they painted from the life;" but that the divine Person whose life they described, endued them with supernatural power to guide them into all truth, and to bring all things to their remembrance. Inspiration alone could have furnished a perfect delineation of a perfect character.

18. Consider, further, the scheme of redemption which the Scriptures reveal. This, on the supposition of the corruption and misery of mankind, harmonises with the character of God as infinitely holy and merciful, and affords a discovery of his purity and love which no created being would have previously conceived. That we have offended God is the uniform testi-

mony of Scripture, and reason and experience confirm the fact. But how is man to become just with his Maker? How is the favour of that awful and Almighty Being who is able to destroy both body and soul to be regained? The Bible answers the question by declaring that God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This answer, which comprises the substance of the gospel, implies that the Son of God became incarnate; that he offered himself a sacrifice without spot unto God; and that in consideration of the satisfaction which he rendered to divine justice, God is just, while justifying him that believeth on Jesus.

19. Than this admirable provision for the removal of human guilt and misery, what can be conceived more worthy of God, or more necessary to man? There is no denying of the facts that mankind are in a condition of moral ruin; that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and that they are involved in a labyrinth of ignorance and error, from which no efforts of theirs can deliver them. Christianity presents the relief which they require, by declaring that he who is God was manifested in the flesh for their redemption; that he evinced the greatness of his love by a proof the most unequivocal and endearing; that he is now exalted to bestow repentance and the forgiveness of sins; and that whosoever cometh to him for these blessings, he will in no wise cast out. Do we not behold in this glorious scheme the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God? Does not human reason perceive that the atonement, made by a Person of infinite dignity and worth, must possess infinite efficacy? Is it not also equally clear that the sacred writers, by whom it has been taught, received it by immediate revelation from God? "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. i. 11, 12.)

20. Reflect, further, on the tendency of the Bible. It directly inculcates, and it is admirably fitted to produce the practice of whatsoever is just, or honest, or true, or lovely, or of good report. It authoritatively enjoins the duties which are peculiar to every relation, and to all the circumstances of life; it requires purity of heart, as well as righteousness of life; and it allows none, whatever be their rank and station, to deem themselves exempted from any of the obligations of morality.

In place of conniving, as false religion has always done, at the indulgence of the appetites and passions of human nature, it affirms that all such inordinate indulgence is offensive to God, and excludes from the kingdom of heaven. It teaches men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. Its object is to lead mankind to give their hearts to God, to seek their chief enjoyment in his favour, to induce them to consecrate themselves to his service, and voluntarily to glorify him by their spirits and their bodies which are God's.

21. Christianity produces this purity of character which it requires in its disciples. It begins its operation on the heart; and by its doctrines and precepts, its hopes and consolations, it assumes the necessity of that genuine penitence and spiritual devotion which follow regeneration. It not only assures us in direct terms that we must be born again, but by the example which it exhibits for our imitation, and the high standard of holiness to which it teaches us to aspire, it reminds us of our need of the purifying influence which the gospel brings to our aid. But surely the book which possesses this holy tendency, and which has been so extensively efficacious in the transformation of human character, must have been dictated by the God of truth and holiness. It is the very image of his character and perfections.

22. Consider, finally, the wonderful preservation of the Scriptures. Some of them were written more than three thousand years ago; and they were completed nearly two thousand years since; yet they have been transmitted to us without adulteration or mutilation. At the same time, the mighty and the powerful have frequently conceived themselves interested in suppressing them, and have employed all their authority, and the utmost severity of persecution to accomplish their destruction. This divine book, by its purity, its warnings, its denunciations, has aroused the passions of men in all ages against it; but though assailed by the abettors of infidelity, and hated by those who love darkness rather than light, it has been preserved unimpaired by the providence of God. The Jews have faithfully preserved the Scriptures of the Old Testament, while these Scriptures describe their apostasy, dispersion, and punishment; and antichristian Rome, though it arrogated infallibility, and had the dominion over Christendom during many ages, attempted not to destroy that book, the pro-



phesies of which clearly define its unholy character, and announce its doom.

23. The Bible has thus been under the care of Almighty God. An unseen hand has surrounded it in the midst of enemies and perils; and its continued preservation, in such circumstances, is an attestation that it is the word of him, whose word shall not return unto him void, but which shall accomplish that which he pleases, and prosper in the thing whereunto he has sent it.

24. Thus have I shown that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament have been given by inspiration of God. I began by adducing the proofs which establish the inspiration and divine authority of the New Testament. It is obvious that if this portion of divine revelation had been written by our Lord, a different line of argumentation would have been sufficient to prove its claims to be received as the oracles of God. In that case it would only have been requisite to confirm the genuineness and authenticity of the document; since the miracles which were wrought by our Lord, and the striking prophecies which he delivered, together with the extraordinary character which he exhibited to the world, declared him to have been the Messenger of Heaven, and attested the infallible truth and divine authority of all that he uttered as a Teacher sent from God. But as he left it to his apostles to write the history of his life and ministry, and also to give further explanations of the doctrines of that religion which he taught, of course it was necessary to have proved that he gave them commission to do so; that this commission implied and required in its fulfilment supernatural influence; that the Saviour had promised that this supernatural influence would be given to his apostles to guide them in the discharge of their official duty; that they themselves laid claim to this supernatural power; that the miracles which they wrought, and the prophecies which they recorded, proved the validity of this claim; and that it was universally admitted by the myriads of Jews and Gentiles who believed on Christ.

25. With regard to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, I have shown that their inspiration and divine authority are attested by the writers of the New; that the commission which Moses received as the deliverer, legislator, and prophet of the Jews, implied and required supernatural influence; that he himself laid claim to inspiration; that this claim was fully

admitted when it was made, and has been admitted ever since, by the whole body of the Jewish people; that it was confirmed by the testimony of a long-continued series of prophets; that the inspiration of the Books of Moses being established, that of the other historical, devotional, and prophetic books follows as a necessary consequence; and that the divine authority of all the canonical writings received by the Jews, is assumed throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews.

26. I then adduced a few arguments, derived from the internal evidence in proof of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. I trust, from what has been advanced on this subject, it has appeared, that we have in the Bible an infallible revelation of the will of God; an authentic and authoritative record of his procedure toward the human race; an exhaustless treasury of truth without any mixture of error; an unerring directory on all those subjects, in regard to which all who have the feelings and the reflections of man are concerned; and, as the oracles of God, the source of real and lasting improvement to mankind.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### ON THE INSPIRATION AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES— THEORIES OF INSPIRATION—PLENARY INSPIRATION.

1. IN virtue of the peculiar evidences by which the divine truth of the Bible is affirmed to be proved, it stands forth to our view as claiming not only divine authority, but exclusive divine authority, on the ground of the exclusiveness of the evidence by which its heavenly origin is proved. It is proved, by the evidences by which it is characterised, to be divine and authoritative; and because nothing else but itself is thus proved, nothing else but itself possesses divine authority. A little reflection shows, that if this volume be really distinguished by those peculiarities of evidence which stamp it as the record of revealed truth, it irresistibly follows from the nature of such evidence, that it must possess that divine character, to the utter exclusion of every other species of record or document which does not exhibit those peculiarities of evidence. The evidence accompanying it establishes its divine authority; no other book has such evidence in its support; and therefore no other book has any claim to divine authority.

We are thus led to consider the inspiration of the Holy

Scriptures. What are we to understand by divine inspiration? Are all the sacred writings inspired?

2. Three different theories have been formed respecting the inspiration of the holy Scriptures. Some of these, though they have been held by divines of eminence, appear to me to be not only unwarrantable opinions, but to expose their authors to the charge of an attempt to unfold the *mode* in which the Holy Spirit operated on the faculties of the inspired penmen—a labour unwise and unphilosophical, and which can never lead to any useful result.

3. One class of persons disown the existence of inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Of this number are the Socinians and the German Neologists. The Socinians have admitted that the prophecies, and other messages from heaven, were inspired by God in the usual sense of the phrase; but they disown the inspiration and infallible authority of the Scriptures as a whole.

4. A second class of persons maintain the inspiration of all the canonical books of Scripture, but not in equal degree. According to their view, inspiration, though universal, is unequal, often imperfect, and even accompanied, in a few instances, with harmless errors. Some of them have specified four degrees of inspiration: that of superintendence, by which the sacred penmen have been preserved from error; that of elevation, by which their minds were exalted and their understandings enlarged; that of direction, so as to instruct them what they were to record, and what to omit; and that of suggestion, by which the sentiments and words were communicated to the writers.

5. But these and all such distinctions, in regard to the degree and the extent to which the several parts of the Bible have been inspired of God, are unwarranted and hurtful. They are unwarranted, for they are made, not only without the authority of divine revelation, but in opposition to its explicit affirmation, that all Scripture, without distinction, is given by inspiration of God. They are unwarranted, moreover, because they are made in a department which is exclusively God's, to which the human faculties cannot reach, and the attempt to intrude upon which savours of folly and impiety. They are hurtful, for they have led good men to speak and write concerning some parts of Scripture in language derogatory to the authority of God's word, revolting to pious minds, and calcu-

lated to confirm the unbeliever in his infidelity. Every part of the sacred volume, whether doctrinal or preceptive, whether historical or prophetical, whether it relates to this life or to the glories of immortality, has been given alike by inspiration of God, and is to be received throughout, without any exception or reservation, not as the word of man, but as the word of God.\* This leads me to notice,

6. The third, and, as I conceive, the true opinion respecting inspiration, is, that in all the sentiments which the sacred penmen have recorded, and in all the expressions which they employed, they were under the supernatural teaching and infallible instruction and guidance of the Holy Spirit; they spoke not in language of their own selection, but in words which were given to them by God. Their own testimony upon this point has been given in the strongest terms. "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit. We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth.—We have the mind of Christ.—Be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.—The things that I write unto you are commandments of the Lord.—He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not men, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. ii. 7, 10—16; 2 Cor. iii. 5; 2 Pet. iii. 2; 1 Cor. xiv. 37; 1 Thess. iv. 8.)

7. It is truth, but it is not the whole truth, that a late writer on the inspiration of the Scriptures has stated, when he says, "As the apostles had the infallible guidance of the Spirit of God, their testimony is both the rule and warrant of our faith. Whatever religious sentiments they have declared are to be received and believed, because they are divinely and infallibly true, and whatever opinions in religion are contrary to the plain and unrestrained language and sentiments of the apostles of Christ, ought to be rejected, because they are undoubtedly false." This is truth, but it is not the whole truth. This will be shown after we have quoted the following paragraph.

8. "The objections which have been urged against particular passages of the New Testament are of no weight in overturning

\* Essay on Inspiration, &c. prefixed to Dwight's Theology, by the Author.



the doctrine of inspiration, unless you suppose that the authors wrote continually under the influence of what has been called the inspiration of suggestion; that is, that every thought was put into their mind, and every word dictated to them, by the Spirit of God. But this opinion, which is probably entertained by many well-meaning Christians, and which has been held by some able defenders of Christianity, is now generally abandoned. It is unnecessary to suppose that the highest degree of inspiration was extended through all the parts of the New Testament, but the supposition is really inconsistent with many circumstances that occur there. I shall mention a few. Paul, in some instances, makes a distinction between the counsels which he gives in matters of indifference, upon his own judgment, and the commandments which he delivers with the authority of an apostle:—"I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." "This I command, yet not I, but the Lord"—a distinction for which there could have been no room, had every word been dictated by the Spirit of God. Paul sometimes discovers a doubt and a change of purpose as to the time of his journeyings and other incidents, which the highest degree of inspiration would have prevented."\*

9. It is true, that all religious sentiments contained in Scripture are absolute verity; but this is not the whole truth; for all Scripture has been given by inspiration of God. The whole, as to matter and language, is the product of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The distinctions alluded to by this author shall be afterwards noticed; in the meantime, I shall only observe that I consider all such distinctions as improper, because at variance with truth, and fitted to divide the one perfect body of divine revelation.

10. It is quite true, that as one star differs from another star in lustre, so in this firmament of Scripture, some books emit more splendid and ample, and others more faint and inconsiderable rays of light, as the exigencies of the church less or more required. The Gospels and Epistles of Paul send forth those radiant beams far more copiously than the Books of Ruth or Esther. Still, all Scripture, both as to sentiments and words, has proceeded from God, and is equally infallible, and of equal authority. He is alike the Author of the whole; and for men, therefore, to propound theories concerning the several kinds of inspiration, is an attempt to be wise where the Bible

\* Parry's Inquiry into the Extent of the Inspiration of the Apostles, p. 15, &c.

is silent, and in a province in regard to which they must be profoundly ignorant.

11. The true doctrine on this subject is, the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in opposition to a merely partial and occasional inspiration; and the verbal inspiration in opposition to those who hold that only the sentiments, and not the words, are inspired. This is the position which I firmly hold, and which I shall endeavour to establish.

12. The opposite doctrine, that of partial and occasional inspiration, seems to have been broached first in modern times by the Arminians in Holland. It was held by Grotius, Episcopius, Le Clerc, and others. Many writers in recent times have maintained it. This was the opinion of Dr. Beattie, who, in replying to the objections founded on the seeming discrepancies betwixt the narratives of the evangelists, represents the inspiration of the sacred writers as applicable merely to their doctrine. Dr. Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta, holds the same theory, and maintains that inspiration extended to every part of the canonical writings, in proportion as each part stood related to religion. The sentiments of Bishop Tomline on the inspiration of the New Testament are equally lax: for he says, "we cannot but believe that he (the Holy Ghost) would enable those whom he appointed to record the gospel, to write without the omission of any important truth, or the insertion of any material error." The bishop warmly recommends, on inspiration, the work of Mr. Parry, who maintains that the writers of the New Testament were preserved from mistakes only "as to every religious sentiment which they taught mankind." The same views are held by some other late writers of great respectability.

13. This theory, however guarded, amounts to this, that the Bible is only partially inspired. But what is a partial inspiration? "A partial inspiration," says Seed, "is to all intents and purposes, no inspiration at all: for mankind would be as much embarrassed to know what was inspired, and what was not, as they could be to collect a religion for themselves; the consequence of which would be, that we are left just where we were, and that God put himself to a great expense of miracles to effect nothing at all; a consequence highly derogatory and injurious to his honour."\*

14. The inspiration of the Scriptures, according to this partial theory, is admitted only with the following restrictions;

first, that its inspiration extends only to matters of a religious and moral nature. But who has authorized the advocates of this theory to assume that inspiration relates exclusively to things sacred and religious? What are those things in the Scriptures which are exclusively of a religious and moral nature? It will be difficult to show that Luke's account of Paul's voyage, when the ship in which he sailed was wrecked on the island of Melita, or that anything else contained in the Bible, has not a moral and religious bearing. Secondly, the abettors of this theory of inspiration concede that the Scripture is free from "material error." But does not this opinion render the Scriptures a vague and uncertain rule? What some may consider material, others may regard as immaterial. If I do not firmly believe that it has God for its Author, and truth without the least mixture of error for its matter, I cannot regard it as entitled to my entire confidence.

15. But we turn away from all such unwarranted and vain speculations to the authoritative declaration of our Lord, respecting the whole of that Scripture which cannot be broken—"till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

16. (I.) The doctrine of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the holy Scriptures is established by the statements of Scripture on the subject. "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken." The whole Bible is characterised as the word of God—the oracles of God. Our Lord spoke of the Old Testament Scriptures as divided into three parts. "All things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me." Which of these three parts can we allege is not fully and verbally inspired? That the Books of Moses, pre-eminently called the law, are so, cannot be denied; "for the law of the Lord is perfect." (Psal. xix. 7.) It was of him, and to him, that the Lord said, "Now, therefore, go; and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." (Exod. iv. 12.) Besides, he was a prophet, and such a prophet, that "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." (Deut. xxxiv. 10.)

17. Another division of the Old Testament our Lord calls the prophets; that is, prophetic Scriptures, all the Old Testament, with the exception of Moses and the Psalms. The Scriptures of the Old Testament are generally called, by our

Lord and the apostles, "Moses and the Prophets." (Luke xxiv. 25, 27, 44 ; Matt. v. 17 ; vii. 12 ; xi. 13 ; Luke xvi. 16, 29, 31 ; xx. 42 ; Acts i. 20 ; iii. 21, 22 ; vii. 35, 37 ; viii. 28 ; xxvi. 22, 27 ; xxviii. 23 ; Rom. i. 2 ; iii. 21 ; x. 5.) All the words of the prophetic Scriptures originated not in the will of man ; "but holy men of God spake them as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 21.) It was to all these holy men that the Lord said, "Behold, I have put my words into thy mouth ; all my words that I shall speak unto thee, speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God ; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." (Ezek. iii. 10, 11.)

18. That the words as well as the sentiments which they were to deliver were communicated to the prophets by God, is evident from the fact, that they were charged to transmit to future ages, oracles, the signification of which was veiled from themselves. Hence the reason why they "inquired and searched diligently ; searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Pet. i. 10, 11.) According to this statement, it was impossible that the prophets could have expressed themselves intelligibly unless words had been supplied to them.

19. The third division of the Old Testament is called the Psalms. The penmen of these are also called prophets. (Matt. xiii. 35.) David, by whom many of the Psalms were written, was not only called a prophet (Acts ii. 30), but he declared respecting himself, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was on my tongue." (2 Sam. xxiii. 2.) We find the following sayings in the Acts : "It is thou, Lord, who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said.—This Scripture must needs be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake." (Acts iv. 25 ; i. 16.) Thus, it appears, the whole of the Old Testament is a written prophecy, in the scriptural sense of the expression ; and, therefore, as it is God who has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets which have been since the world began, (Luke i. 70,) all the Old Testament was written by men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

20. May we not presume that the New Testament, containing as it does the doctrines and the laws of the more perfect dispensation, is equally, both as to sentiment and



language, the product of divine inspiration? We are under no necessity, however, of resting upon reasoning, or upon an inference deduced from the very important nature of the mission on which the apostles were sent. The following declarations assure us that all their official communications are the result of the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what thing ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.—When they bring you before councils and magistrates, take no thought how ye shall speak, nor what ye shall answer in your defence, nor what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost will teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say.—Be not troubled beforehand what ye shall say, neither premeditate, but all shall be given you in that hour; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.—Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to resist." (Matt. x. 19, 20; Mark xiii. 11; Luke xxi. 14, 15.)

21. If it be said, that these promises refer rather to what the apostles were to expect when they were brought before governors and kings, than to any supernatural aid they were to receive as writers, I reply, that if the most entire inspiration were assured to them on passing occasions, to close the mouths of some wicked men, to avert the dangers of a day, and to serve the interests of a fleeting hour—is it not evident that this same aid would not be refused to them, when, like the ancient prophets they should carry on the book of the oracles of God, in order to transmit to future ages the laws of the kingdom of heaven? \* If, as our Lord has declared, the least of the apostles, or the prophets of the New Testament, is greater than the greatest of the prophets under the Old Testament, (Luke vii. 28,) does it not follow, that they were at least as much under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Does not Paul assert as much when he says, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." † "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.—He there-

\* "It is Written," by Gaussen, p. 79.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

fore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit." (1 Thess. ii. 13; iv. 8.)

22. It has sometimes been objected that Luke and Mark were not, properly speaking, apostles, and that, consequently, they had not received the same inspiration as the other writers of the New Testament.

They were, however, prophets and evangelists, extraordinary officers in the kingdom of Christ, on whom were conferred the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the chosen fellow-labourers of Paul and Peter. The Gospel of Luke, that of Mark, and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, have the same title to be received as equally inspired by God, and of equal divine authority, with the books written by Matthew, Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John. Their books were admitted into the canon of inspired Scripture by the apostles, who thus attested them as given by inspiration of God, and to be received, "not as the word of man, but as they are in truth the word of God, which worketh effectually in all those that believe." In accordance with these remarks, I observe,

23. (II.) That the plenary inspiration of all the holy Scriptures, both as to sentiment and language, is the decisive declaration of Scripture itself. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. iii. 5.) All Scripture is *Theopneustic*, that is, breathed or inspired by God. Here, then, it is affirmed that all the Scriptures are from God—that every part of the Scripture is from God. Though the apostle immediately refers to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which Timothy had known from a child, it necessarily follows, when all the circumstances of the case are considered, that the same inspiration extends to all the New Testament Scriptures.

24. Even though it were granted, which it is not, that the words of the apostle ought to be translated, "every writing divinely inspired is profitable," the meaning is substantially the same. For the writings referred to are the writings specified in the foregoing verse—"the holy Scriptures." The cause of the profitableness of these writings, the apostle declares to be their divine inspiration. This passage, therefore, even according to this construction, furnishes the strongest testimony to the inspiration of each and every of the books of the Old Testament.\*

\* Smith's Testimony to the Messiah, vol. i. p. 35. 1 Thess. ii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 13.

25. But for reasons which have been already assigned, it applies to the writings contained in the New Testament. The apostles claim for themselves the highest degree of inspiration in passages formerly quoted, and in the following words:—“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” “Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.” “But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”\* In what terms more perspicuous could the apostle assure his readers, that the words as well as the sentiments of the sacred writings were dictated by the Holy Spirit? He, and his fellow-apostles, used appropriate words to express heavenly truths; but the words as well as the truths were taught them by God.

26. (III.) This position is established by the promises made to them by our Lord, of divine and supernatural teaching. “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”† In this promise all the things are contained which are included in the plenary inspiration of the apostles; namely, that the Holy Spirit, after the ascension of Christ, would in a miraculous manner descend upon them, to endue them with the gift of prophecy, and to bring fully and with infallible accuracy all things that he had taught them. If this promise, in its utmost extent of meaning, was fulfilled; and of that who can doubt? then the apostles wrote and preached the gospel under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The great seal of Heaven having been affixed to their commission by the miraculous gifts with which they were furnished, they were constituted the infallible religious instructors of the world, were authorized

\* 2 Cor. ii. 10—13.

† John xiv. 26; xvi. 13.

to expound the Scriptures which had been previously written, and to complete and close the canon of divine revelation. The doctrines and commandments which they were to deliver or record, were of equal authority with that which had been spoken by Christ himself: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."

27. It is true, one of the persons employed in writing a large portion of the New Testament, was not called to be an apostle till after the day of Pentecost. But he was supernaturally called to the office of apostleship: his designation to his office, and his qualifications for its exercise, were alike of God. "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead. I neither received the gospel of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ."\*

28. (IV.) The plenary inspiration of the apostles is implied in their divine commission, and was necessary for its fulfilment. Their commission required that they should be infallible historians of the life, ministry, and sufferings of their Lord and Master, and authoritative guides and instructors of mankind, by adding to and completing the revelation of the will of God. The Person whose character they were to portray, and whose discourses they were to record, was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; and therefore the love of truth, and tried integrity, were not sufficient to qualify them for their duty. Supernatural influence was absolutely necessary to enable them to communicate, without mistake or error, all the sayings of Jesus; to give an infallible account of his doings and sufferings. In addition to this, they were entrusted with the task of completing the revelation of divine truth; they were to act in Christ's stead, as his ambassadors and representatives. Could they have fulfilled an office so arduous—and on the faithful fulfilment of which the salvation of millions of the human race depended—unless they had been under the plenary inspiration of God? They who believed their statements were to be saved, and they who believed them not were to be condemned. Their office required the fulfilment of the words of Christ, "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.—It shall be given you what ye shall speak."†

\* Gal. i. 1—18.

† Matt. x. 20; Mark xiii. 11; Luke xxi. 14, 15.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PLENARY INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, CONTINUED.

IN addition to the various arguments which have been adduced in proof of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, I observe,

1. (V.) That the appellations applied to the sacred volume tend to prove this position. How often is it called "the word of God," and "the word of the Lord!" We often meet with the following phraseology in the Old Testament: "Thy word, thy law, thy testimonies, thy statutes, thy commandments, thy judgments:" phraseology which implies that the words as well as the sentiments were dictated by the Spirit of God. The Scriptures are designated "the oracles of God—the lively oracles;" a term which was originally applied to the responses rendered to those who solicited information at the pagan temples. The oracles of God signify communications from God, both as to the thoughts and the words. They are the very utterances of his mouth; and, therefore, the Scriptures are perfect as the dictation of God's Holy Spirit. It is with the utmost propriety they may be compared to a treasure of incalculable value; to unadulterated milk, by which the new creature is nourished; and to the dew that descends to mollify and fertilize the earth.

2. (VI.) The plenary inspiration of certain portions of the Scripture is admitted by all. The Ten Commandments were entirely from God. All the prophecies, a large portion of the Scripture, were dictated by God to the prophets.

It remains for us to consider whether complete and verbal inspiration was necessary for the other portions of Scripture. It has been said that the historical part of the Bible requires no inspiration. "There was no need," says Grotius, "that the histories should be dictated by the Holy Spirit. It was sufficient that the writer had a good memory for the things he had seen, or that he was careful in transcribing the ancient records." This was the opinion of Bishop Tomline also, who says—"Since, then, we are taught to consider the divine assistance as ever proportioned to the real wants of men, and since it must be granted that their natural faculties, though wholly incompetent to the prediction of future events, are adequate to the relation of such past occurrences as have fallen within the sphere of their own observation, we may infer that the

historical books are not written with the same uniform inspiration which illumines every page of the prophetic writings.”\*

3. In answer to this we might deem it enough to repeat the declaration of Scripture—“All Scripture,” including the various modes of composition which it contains, “is given by inspiration of God.” But waiving at present this conclusive declaration, we may ask, If inspiration was not necessary to the writers of the history which the Bible contains, why was the writing of that history assigned to individuals who were invested with the prophetic character, and who, in that character, were undoubtedly inspired? Sacred history was designed to illustrate the justice, holiness, sovereignty, forbearance, and wisdom of God, in the government of the world—to show the depravity of human nature—and the necessity of the interposing grace of God for the recovery of man. The whole was designed by God to subserve the progressive development of the plan of redeeming mercy, and had a special reference, more or less direct, to the reign and the kingdom of the Messiah. Hence the lives of the patriarchs are particularly detailed, while the affairs of their posterity in Egypt are cursorily related. The history of the reigns of David and Solomon, because they were distinguished types of the Redeemer, occupy a large space in the sacred records; while the events that happened in the days of the Judges, comprising about four hundred years, are narrated with great brevity. It might be shown at length that in the history of Moses, Joshua, Joseph, David, Jonah, and other eminent persons whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament, there are many facts which were designed to prefigure particulars in the character and history of Christ. How could history such as this—so vast in its plan, so elevated in its aim, so spiritual in its tendency, and so full of doctrinal and practical instruction, not for one age or nation, but for all ages and nations, till the end of time—be composed, but by the full and the verbal inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

4. These remarks apply, if possible with still greater force, to the historical portions of the New Testament. In these we have portrayed the life of Him, whose perfect wisdom, and sublime moral grandeur of character, are unparalleled; in whom are exhibited to the world the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Could a true and

\* Elements of Christian Theology, vol. i. p. 26.

adequate record be given of such transcendent excellence, and of a character altogether divine, by illiterate men, such as the apostles were, without complete inspiration? "To relate, at the distance of twenty years, long moral discourses, which were not originally written, and which were not attended with any striking circumstances that might imprint them upon the mind; to preserve a variety of parables, the beauty and significancy of which depended upon particular expressions; to record long and minute prophecies, where the alteration of a single phrase might have produced an inconsistency between the event and the prediction; and to give a particular detail of the intercourse which Jesus had with his friends and with his enemies: all this is a work so much above the capacity of unlearned men, that, had they attempted to execute it by their own natural powers, they must have fallen into such absurdities and contradictions as would have betrayed them to every discerning eye. It was therefore necessary, that, besides those opportunities of information which the apostles enjoyed, and that tried integrity which they possessed, their understandings and their memory should be assisted by a supernatural influence, which might prevent them from mistaking the meaning of what they had heard, which might restrain them from putting into the mouth of Jesus any words which he did not utter, or from omitting what was important, and which might thus give us perfect security that the Gospels are as faithful a copy, as if Jesus himself had left in writing those sayings and those actions which he wished posterity to remember."\*

5. If plenary inspiration was necessary for the writers of the historical parts of Scripture, it will be admitted that it was required in communicating those doctrines which reason could not discover, and which "angels desire to look into." The same full inspiration was necessary in writing the moral and devotional parts of Scripture.

6. (VII.) An argument for the full and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures arises from the intimate connexion that exists between thoughts and the words in which they are expressed. That such connexion exists, no one will doubt who attends to the operations of his own mind. From the power of association and early habit, it is scarcely possible for us to pursue a train of reflections without clothing them with

\* Hill's Lectures, vol. i. p. 311.

expressions. Why, then, should we doubt that the sacred writers, when inspired by the Spirit of God, received from him not the bare substance, or naked ideas of what they committed to writing, but the very words in which these ideas are clothed. That the Spirit was able to communicate the thoughts in this regular and embodied state, will be conceded by all who believe the existence and omnipotence of God. To imagine that the Spirit, by some inconceivable mode, supplied the ideas, but quite withheld the expressions—that he really inspired the sacred writers with knowledge, but left it to each to choose whatever words he pleased—seems to be utterly incongruous, and to be at variance with the certain fact, that our thoughts, and the words proper to express them, are naturally and inseparably linked together.\*

7. I have thus proved the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. I have not exhausted the evidence. I might advert to the acknowledged excellence of the language, as fitted to strengthen our belief of its verbal inspiration. When we consider the education and habits of the writers generally, and how much they were unaccustomed to composition of any kind, far less to the beautiful and sublime diction of Scripture, we have surely presumptive evidence that they were under the direction of Infinite Wisdom. Amos, taken from the pastoral life, and Isaiah, taken from the royal family of Judah, are alike sublime in conception and in language.

8. (VIII.) The authority of the Scriptures, as an infallible rule of faith and practice for all mankind, and until the end of time, seems to imply and to require verbal inspiration. How often was the unalterable authority of the Scriptures as a standing rule declared! "Whatsoever things I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." "Add thou not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." "Search the Scriptures," said our Lord, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life. Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." I shall only further quote the language, solemn and awful, with which the canon of divine revelation is closed: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book; if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this

\* Essay on the Plenary Inspiration, by Dr. Fraser.



prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book." \*

9. How could such solemn and awful declarations be pronounced respecting writings, the words of which could not be absolutely depended upon as conveying the mind of the Spirit? If the words of Scripture have not been given by inspiration of God, as well as the sentiments they contain, we are still left to make the voyage of life in the midst of rocks and shelves and quicksands, with a compass vacillating and useless, and our pole-star enveloped in mists and obscurity.†

10. But it is not so; our Lord and Saviour, in his numerous references to Scripture, showed that he believed in its plenary and verbal inspiration. I shall only quote one example in proof of this. When he gave utterance to the words, "I and my Father are one," the Jews accused him of blasphemy, and took up stones to stone him, saying, "We stone thee, because being a man, thou makest thyself God." He defends the sublime doctrine of his equality with God, from an expression quoted by him in the eighty-second Psalm; and adds to the quotation the emphatic announcement—"the Scripture cannot be broken." The words which he quotes are, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" If the neological divines of our day had been present, they would have alleged that the words quoted were the result of fervid imagination, and therefore no stress should be laid upon them. But our Lord repelled every objection by the authoritative affirmation—"The Scripture cannot be broken."‡ It cannot be invalidated or set aside. Is not this the decisive testimony of our Lord to the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures?

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## CHAPTER V.

THE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH DOWN TILL THE REFORMATION, RESPECTING  
PLENARY INSPIRATION.

1. THE question of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is to be decided, not by human authority, but by the testimony of God. Yet, it may not be improper to advert

\* Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

† Gregory's Letters on the Evidences, &c. Let. 10.

‡ John x. 27—35.

to the opinions which were entertained on this subject down till the sixteenth century.

2. It was the uniform doctrine of the whole church till the period referred to, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are throughout infallible, because they have been given by inspiration of God; and that on this ground they are entitled to be implicitly received. As the word of God, they contain nothing erroneous, or useless, or superfluous; than this, there was no point about which the ancient church was more unanimous.

3. The doctrine of complete and plenary inspiration must not be regarded as a theory of modern times. The opposition of the ancient church to the heretics, and the nature of the answers and refutations which the church gave to the errors that were broached from time to time, sufficiently show that this doctrine was most firmly held by it. All the time that the Fathers, in defending truth by passages of the Bible, were forcing their adversaries to defend themselves only by denying the plenary inspiration of these divine testimonies, the church has regarded the questions as settled. The adversary assumed the place of a judge; there was nothing more to be said to him, since he denied the Scriptures to be the word of God.\*

4. The reader who wishes to see at length the views of the ancient church, may consult the following passages from the Fathers:—Irenæus *Advers. Hæreses*, lib. ii. chap. 47, lib. iii. chap. 2, lib. iv. chap. 34; Tertullian, *De Anima*, chap. 28; *Advers. Marcion*, lib. iv. chap. 22; Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. chap. 33, 35, 50, 51; *Dialog. contra Tryph.* chap. 7. See the testimonies quoted by Lardner, vol. ii. *passim*. We might refer to the writings of Origen, Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Augustine; but it is not necessary, as the fact is unquestionable that the voice of the whole church, till the Reformation, affirmed the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the canonical Scriptures.

5. But we do not rely on any authority for the inspiration of the Scriptures, but on that of the inspired writers themselves. If it be said, this is begging the question; it is proving inspiration by inspiration; I reply, there would be a begging of the question, if to prove that the Scriptures are inspired, we should call in their own testimony, as if they were inspired. We must beware of proceeding thus. We first ascertain the authenticity and genuineness of the Scriptures. These being

\* Rudelbach on Inspiration.

fully established, we learn from these documents the doctrines which they teach. One of these doctrines is their own *theopneusty*, or inspiration of God—that they are all plenarily inspired. This doctrine is of equal authority with any other doctrine of divine revelation.

6. The testimony of the Catholic Church is indeed important, as it is the consent of the universal church to the divine authority of the Scriptures. But we are to beware of the notion, that the authority of the Scriptures is founded upon that of the church. The church acts as a witness and as a servant, not as a mistress; a depository, not a judge. She exercises an office, not an authority. She gives her testimony, not her sentence. She discerns the canon of Scripture, she has not made it. She has recognised their authenticity, she has not constituted it. And as the men of Shechem believed in Jesus Christ, not from the report of the sinful but penitent woman who called them to him, so we say to the church, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying; we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” We have believed, then, *per eam*, and not *propter eam*; by means of her, and not because of her. We found her on her knees, and she showed us her Master; we have recognised him, and we have ourselves knelt with her. If I mingle in the last ranks of an imperial army, if I request them to point out to me their prince, to conduct me to him, they will do in respect to him for me what the church does for the Scriptures. They will not say that their emperor has authority by their testimony alone, whether as it regards themselves or us. The authority of the Scriptures is in no way founded on the authority of the church; it is the church which is founded on the authority of the Scriptures.\*

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## CHAPTER VI.

### DIFFICULTIES OBIATED, AND OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

1. THE individuality of the sacred writers, so deeply impressed upon their writings, appears to some to be irreconcilable with plenary and verbal inspiration. How obvious, say they, are the differences in their modes of thinking, their language,

\* Gausson on the Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures, p. 266.

thoughts, and style ! This diversity is apparent between one prophet and another, between one apostle and another. We remark in the writings of each, the influence which the writer's education, habits, and external circumstances, exercised on his trains of thought, his language, and reasoning. In their writings we see the individual character of each clearly portrayed—his cast of mind, his peculiar composition. The fact is incontestable ; it is fully admitted. The conclusion is, that it is irreconcilable with a plenary inspiration. It is argued, that "if it were God who alone and unceasingly speaks in the Scriptures, we should see in their various parts a uniformity which does not exist. It must, therefore, be admitted, that two different powers have acted, at the same time, upon the sacred writers, while they composed the Scriptures—the natural power of their individuality, and the miraculous powers of inspiration. From the conflict, or the concurrence, or the balanced action of these two powers, there must have resulted a variable and gradual inspiration ; sometimes full, sometimes imperfect, and often even reduced to the feeble measure of a mere supervision. The variable power of the divine Spirit, in this united action, must have proportioned itself to the importance and difficulty of the matter treated of by the sacred writers. It may even have abstained from interfering, where the judgment and memory of the writer could suffice, because God does not perform useless miracles."

Such is the reasoning upon which certain writers already referred to allege, that in the Scriptures are passages devoid of importance, and others imperfect and not altogether free from error.

2. We fully admit that the individuality of the sacred writers is throughout impressed upon their writings. In the Books of Moses, we have his peculiar phraseology and voice ; in the prophecies of Isaiah we have a very different phraseology ; in the writings of John, Peter, and Paul, we have the language and manner peculiar to each of these apostles ; but in this we see the wisdom and goodness of God. How can this fact detract from the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures ? Who can show that the most complete inspiration is not perfectly compatible with the individuality of the sacred writers ? It has indeed been asserted, but the assertion can never be proved, that the great diversity of style and diction observable in the Scriptures is almost a sure indication that the Holy



Ghost was not the sole Author of every word and expression. Why may not the Holy Ghost have dictated every word, and yet Isaiah, who was bred at a court, be more florid in his expressions than Amos, who had his education among the herds?

3. The great error which lies at the foundation of this graduated system of inspiration is, that the advocates of this system do not look for inspiration in that which is written, but in the manner and in the language in which it has been written. How God acted on the faculties of his servants when he vouchsafed to them the gift of inspiration I know not; but he has attested the fact, that all Scripture—all that is written—is inspired. Consequently the whole is the word of God. The words which proceeded from the writers were suggested to them by the Spirit of the Lord.

4. The human individuality, so evident throughout the Scriptures, adds to their beauty and attractive power. The revelation of God thus comes to us, through the language of human thought and emotion. Amidst a pleasing variety, we observe the unity which characterises all the works of God. But this diversity of expression and style is not only pleasing, so pleasing, that the most cultivated minds as well as the pious peasant find inexhaustible enjoyment in it; it serves also to confirm the authenticity and integrity of the Scriptures.

5. Would those who object to the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, on account of the human individuality impressed upon them, specify what style they would fix upon as indicative of plenary inspiration? They want uniformity in the expression, in order to indicate complete verbal inspiration. Would it satisfy them if the Bible throughout were written in the style of Moses, or Isaiah, or of Paul? But do they not see that if this had been the case, there would have been a strong ground of objection to the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures?

6. Besides, the objection to the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, arising from diversity of style, the objectors themselves renounce when they admit, as they do, the complete inspiration of such dissimilar portions of the sacred writings as the prophecies of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Daniel, of Ezekiel, and of John. When they allow that the very great diversity as to peculiar style, manner, and character, is not inconsistent with the most complete inspiration, as it regards

both matter and diction of these prophetical writings, where is even the ground of a shadow for making the individuality of manner observable in the other portions of Scripture an objection to their plenary inspiration? The objection, moreover, proves a great deal too much; for, if admitted at all, it would prove that the sentiments contained in the Scriptures are as exclusively of human origin as the words, and that the whole is uninspired. While the sacred writers throughout teach the same doctrines and duties, how varied is their mode of conceiving the subject, and how different are the lights in which it is presented, according to their several peculiarities of mind as well as of manner!

7. Let us guard against the adoption of a principle which, if it prove anything, would lead to the denial of the Scriptures throughout. The principle is untenable, and the position on which it is founded is altogether false; it is this—that the Spirit of God has a style of his own, which must characterise every writing inspired by him, and that, therefore, he cannot adapt the expressions in which a divine revelation is communicated to every man's peculiar habits of thinking and modes of composition.

8. The adoption of this erroneous principle has led to a false theory of inspiration—false, because it imputes, most unwarrantably and untruly, to the sacred writers different degrees of inspiration; and false also, because it denies the inspiration of those parts of the Scriptures in which the sacred writers only relate what they have seen and known, and the supernatural communication of which, therefore, they think altogether unnecessary. Discarding this and all other theories of a similar nature, let us look to *what is written*, and believe on the express authority of God that it is inspired; that its Author is God; that truth unmingled with error is its matter; and that the salvation of man is its end.

9. It is God that speaks to us; but he speaks to us by making use of the individualities, and diversified and characteristic modes of thinking and writing of the different persons employed by him, in communicating a revelation of his will to mankind. The words which they fixed upon were as directly and certainly from God, as if they had been spoken to them by an audible voice. There were three thousand years between Enoch and John in Patmos: mighty changes had taken place in the world, in the course of that time: but he who said by

Enoch,—“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,” spoke by John, “Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him.” He who said to Moses, “I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say,” assured Jeremiah, “Behold, I have put words in thy mouth.” We have the majestic narratives of Moses, so characteristic of the manner of an early age, the lyre of David, the poetic grandeur of Isaiah, the sententious wisdom of Solomon, the fervid and argumentative energy of Paul, the solemnity of Peter, and the simplicity of John; but it is God, it is God who speaks. While they retained all their characteristic individuality of mind and manner, the word which proceeded from their lips is from heaven.

10. The words of the sacred writers are at once the words of God and their words as the instruments used by him. It has the characteristics of human thought and emotion, and yet it is the word of the Lord, “quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword.” We see in this abounding humanity, and in this personality with which the Scriptures are invested, the condescension of God; and are thus, as it were, reminded that the Saviour of whom they testify, himself bears a human heart on the throne of God. “It is thus also that they present to us not only that double character of variety and unity which has ever adorned all the other works of God; but that intermingling of familiarity with authority, of sympathy with greatness, and of humanity with divinity, which are manifested in all the dispensations of God, as the Redeemer and Shepherd of his Church. Everywhere we recognise the same Author; and though a thousand years intervene, it is plainly the same eternal Spirit which has conceived and dictated the whole. Everywhere, at Babylon as at Horeb, at Jerusalem as at Athens, and at Rome as at Patmos, we find the same God described, the same world, the same men, the same angels, the same future, the same heaven; the same representation of the necessity and efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and the same way of acceptance with that God who delighteth in mercy. We therefore conclude, that the plentiful traces of humanity which are found in the Scriptures, far from compromising their *theopneustia*, are but indications of their divinity.”\*

\* Gaussen on Inspiration. “It is written,” p. 56.

## CHAPTER VII.

DIFFICULTIES OBTIATED, AND OBJECTIONS ANSWERED, CONTINUED.

II. It is further objected to the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, that though plenary and verbal inspiration belonged to the original text, it cannot be ascribed to translations. Admitting, say the objectors, that the inspiration of the Scriptures extends to the words of the original text, of what avail is this verbal exactness, since, after all, the great majority of Christians can only use versions more or less inaccurate? On the other hand, according to the theory which requires not a plenary verbal inspiration, the reader of any fair translation of the Scriptures, though it may fall very short of the beauty and energy of the original, loses not the divine inspiration, because it lies not in the words, but in the things signified.

In answer, I reply, First, That this objection does not really assail the doctrine of verbal inspiration; but only questions its advantages, because, as is argued, they are lost in a translation. Secondly, On the supposition that all the expressions of the original text were given by God, we are infinitely more assured of the accuracy of the translations than we could be on the contrary supposition. Of the great importance of the original text having been dictated by God, any one may be convinced who reflects, that while our translations are the labour of a great number of men who could devote to it their time and attention, the original text had to be written at a given moment, and by one man alone. No one was with this individual but his God only, to correct him, if he misapprehended aught, and to supply him with right expressions, if he should use imperfect ones. If therefore God has not done it, no one could have done it. If this man erred in giving the mind of the Holy Ghost, he had not, like our translators, friends to point out his errors, predecessors to guide him, successors to compare and rectify his mistakes. It is done by one man; and once for all. It may hence be seen how much more necessary was the intervention of the Holy Ghost to the sacred writers than to their translators. Between the transference of the mind of God into human words, and the simple turning of these words into other words, there is a distance



equal to that of heaven from earth. The one required God ; while, for the other, man sufficed.”\*

The reader of a fair translation, then, loses not the benefit of a plenary verbal inspiration of the original text, because the words of that text, which express the mind of the Spirit, have been faithfully turned into other words which he understands. How untruly is it alleged, as is done by the advocates of the theory I oppose, that the reader of a translation has greater advantages, on the supposition that the religious sentiments contained in Scripture only are inspired, and not the words ! Because the original expresses with unerring accuracy the mind of God, the reader of a fair translation has less benefit, and has in fact no inspired Scriptures at all, than if the words of Scripture had been left entirely to the selection of illiterate men !† The supposition is absurd in the extreme.

III. It is further objected to a complete and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, that the sacred writers of the New Testament often quote from the Septuagint, the translators of which no one will contend were inspired. I allude to this objection, though scarcely worthy of notice, because, when fully examined, it turns out to be an argument.

In reply, I have to observe, first, that the writers of the New Testament quote sometimes literally from the Septuagint ; and the Septuagint version in such cases we may regard as perfectly accurate. Secondly, they often make quotations from the original Hebrew, which they accurately translate, but different from the Septuagint. Thirdly, in order to indicate more clearly the meaning of the passage which they quote from the Old Testament, they give a paraphrase of it. Compare Mic. v. 2, and Matt. ii. 6 ; Mal. iii. 1, and Matt. xi. 10 ; Mark i. 2, and Luke vii. 27.

They, as the servants of the Most High God, were under the supernatural direction and inspiration of his Spirit, and therefore entitled thus to act.

IV. Closely connected with the foregoing objection is the following, grounded on the alleged incorrectness of quotations made by the New Testament writers from the Old. “Quotations,” it is said, “should be exact, strictly conformable to the writers quoted, and employed in precisely the same sense in which those authors have used them ; but the evangelists

\* Gaussen on Inspiration, p. 120. Carson on Inspiration.

† Smith's Scripture Test. vol. i. p. 98.

often transpose and alter the words in the passages they cite, add to or diminish from the sentences recorded, and then make them express a very different sense from that which the prophets intended. Why, then, should we suppose that the whole matter, and much less the language, is divinely inspired?"

In reply, I observe that in their quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures, the writers of the New never so altered the words of a passage as to make it express a different meaning from that which the Holy Spirit originally intended. Without absolutely confining themselves to the original phraseology, they only rendered the meaning more emphatical. They used that liberty which the Holy Spirit gave them, without any prejudice to truth, or to the faith of the church.\* "The sacred penmen, being themselves inspired, might take liberties which we must not; because their comments were equally the word of God with the texts commented on."†

The variations are such, wherever they occur, as were required to be made for the instruction of the converts to Christianity, in order to their obtaining a true knowledge of the Old Testament prophecies.

The citations from the Old Testament in the New have been referred by Rosenmüller and others to four classes. First, quotations in which the things predicted are literally accomplished. Secondly, when that is done of which the Scripture has spoken, not in a literal, but in a spiritual sense. Thirdly, when the thing is done, neither in a literal nor in a spiritual sense, but bears a similarity to the fact alluded to. Quotations of this class are termed accommodated. Fourthly, when the sacred writers have made simple allusion to passages in the Old Testament, for the sake of illustration.

1. Quotations from the Old Testament in the New, in which the things predicted are literally accomplished. Direct prophecies which relate to Christ and the gospel, and to them alone, and which cannot be taken in any other sense, are said to be fulfilled in the literal sense when the event which it foretells is accomplished. Citations from the Old Testament in the New of this class are numerous. The following are examples:—

\* Dr. John Owen.

† Scott's Comment. in Christ. Observ. for 1810.

*Old Testament Passages*

Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18.  
 Gen. xvii. 7, 19; xxii. 16, 17.  
 Deut. xviii. 15, 19.  
 Psalm ii. 1, 2.  
 Psalm ii. 7.  
 Psalm viii. 2.  
 Psalm viii. 4—6.  
 Psalm xvi. 8—11.  
 Psalm xxii.  
 Psalm xlv. 6, 7.

Psalm cx.  
 Isa. liii.

*Quoted in the New.*

Acts iii. 25; Gal. iii. 8.  
 Luke i. 55, 72—74.  
 Acts iii. 22, 23.  
 Acts iv. 25, 26.  
 Acts xii. 33; Heb. i. 5; v. 5.  
 Matt. xxi. 16.  
 Heb. ii. 6—8.  
 Acts ii. 25—28.  
 Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 24, 34.  
 Luke xxiii. 34; John xix. 24; Heb. ii.  
 12.  
 Heb. i. 8, 9.  
 Matt. xx. 44; Mark xii. 36; Luke xx.  
 17; Acts ii. 34; Heb. i. 13; Heb.  
 v. 6; John xii. 38; Rom. x. 16;  
 Acts xxvi. 22; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Matt.  
 viii. 17; Mark xv. 28; Luke xxii.  
 37.

These are only a very few of the examples of quotations of this class.

2. Quotations from the Old Testament in the New, in which that is said to have been done, of which the Scriptures have not spoken in a literal, but in a spiritual sense. The Scripture is said to be fulfilled, when that is accomplished in the antitype which is written concerning the type. Thus, in John xix. 36, we read, "These things were done that the Scriptures should be fulfilled—a bone of him shall not be broken." The Scriptures referred to are, Exod. xii. 46; Numb. ix. 12; passages which originally refer to the paschal lamb, but are said to be fulfilled in Christ the Antitype of that lamb. The following are a few additional examples of this class:—

*Old Testament Passages*

Gen. xiv. 18, 20.  
 Gen. xv. 5.  
 Gen. xvi. 15.  
 Gen. xvii. 4.  
 Exod. xvi. 13—15.  
 Exod. xvii. 6; Numb. xx. 11.  
 Psalm viii. 4—6.

*Quoted in the New.*

Heb. vii. 1—10.  
 Rom. iv. 18.  
 Gal. iv. 22.  
 Rom. iv. 17.  
 John vi. 31, 49; 1 Cor. x. 3.  
 1 Cor. x. 4.  
 Heb. ii. 6—8.

3. Quotations from the Old Testament in the New, accommodated according to a familiar idiom among the Jews. Passages were said to be fulfilled which were spoken by such a prophet, when the words illustrated the meaning of the speaker or writer. Thus Matthew, after relating Herod's murder of the babes in Bethlehem, immediately adds, "Then was fulfilled

that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." (Matt. ii. 17, 18, compare with Jer. xxxi. 15.) The great lamentation of the mothers of Bethlehem is happily illustrated by the beautiful figure of the prophet Jeremiah, who, when describing the miseries of captivity, represents Rachel as deploring the loss of her children, bathed in tears, and overwhelmed with inconsolable grief.

Thus, also, the sacred historian, when relating that the discourses of our Lord abounded with numerous parables, says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet; I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." (Ps. lxxviii. 2; Matt. xiii. 35.)

4. Quotations from the Old Testament which are alluded to in the New. Citations of this description are, properly speaking, allusions to passages in the Old Testament, and they are so nearly allied to those under the former class, that there is little occasion for a distinction. As an example, we may mention Deut. xxx. 12—14, a passage which was originally written concerning the law, but which Paul has accommodated to the gospel. (Rom. x. 6—8.)

V. The various readings are adduced as an objection to a plenary verbal inspiration. "It gives a serious weight to the otherwise nugatory objection against the certainty of the Scriptures from the existence of various readings; for no person, however well qualified, careful, and impartial in applying the rules of criticism, could assure himself, and still less could he satisfy others, that he had in every case ascertained with absolute certainty the one genuine reading. But if we regard the inspiration as attaching to the matter and sentiments rather than to the words, the objection is effectually precluded. It is not in one instance out of five hundred that the diversities of manuscripts and other authorities produce the smallest alteration in the sense."\* In reply, I observe,

First, that this is an attempt to compound two things which are totally different, namely, the first inspiration of the Scriptures, and the integrity of the sacred text. These two things are absolutely distinct the one from the other. The question,

\* Smith's Scripture Test, vol. i. p. 99.



Has the original text been the product of the inspiration of God? and the question, Has this sacred text been transmitted pure and uncorrupt to us? are so far separate and independent, that the one cannot be answered or set aside by the solution of the other. Though it be proved that the Scriptures have been preserved in all their integrity, that will not show that they were originally given by inspiration of God; and the number of various readings in different manuscripts and versions, will not prove that they were not originally inspired.

Secondly, If it be alleged, that though the fact of the inspiration of the sacred text must be independent of the accuracy or inaccuracy of copies made from it many ages after the close of the canon of Scripture, yet the inaccuracy, to any considerable extent, deprives the inspiration of the original text of its value and utility to us—then the question is shifted, and our attention is diverted from the inspiration of the Bible to its present integrity.

I might here refer the reader to that chapter of this book which treats of this subject; but as it occurs in this place as an objection to plenary inspiration, I shall offer a few observations upon it.

It must excite the astonishment of every one who gives his attention to this question, to find how carefully the providence of God has taken care of his word. The Jewish Church was constituted the depository of the living oracles, and afterwards the Christian; and through these channels they have been faithfully transmitted to us.

Researches the most laborious and persevering have placed this fact in an incontrovertible light. What is the result of the labours undertaken in the last century, and continued in the present, to collect all the various readings which could be supplied by an examination of manuscripts, ancient versions, and quotations from the Scriptures in the writings of the Fathers? To this work men of vast learning have devoted their lives—Father Houbigant, Dr. Kennicott, Michaelis, Mill, Bengel, Wetstein, Griesbach, Nolan, Matthæi, Lawrence, De Hugh, and Scholz. What is the discovery which they have made? “If we set aside those admirable negative conclusions at which they have arrived, the obvious result obtained by the lives of so many men consumed in these mighty researches, appears to be nothing.”\* “They,” the enemies of

\* Wiseman's Discourse on the Reports, &c. i. ii. Disc. x.

religion, says Michaelis, "have ceased to hope for anything from the critical researches which they were at first so vehement in recommending, because they expected discoveries which have not been made."

This result will indeed appear to be marvellous, and the doing of the Lord, when it is considered that the Bible has been copied, during three thousand years, as no other book ever has been; that it was carried by Israel to Babylon; that it was often neglected, persecuted, and destroyed; that pagan and imperial Rome employed all its power for its annihilation; that it had to pass through ages of darkness and barbarism, when to read it in the vulgar tongue was punishable with death; and that the Jews, whose rebellions it condemns, and the Romanists, whose apostasy and superadded traditions it denounces, alike have preserved and transmitted it pure and uncorrupt. The variations leave untouched the meaning of the sacred oracles, and relate merely to points (with scarcely an exception) such as the insertion or omission of an article or conjunction, the position of an adjective before or after its substantive.

For example, in the Epistle to the Romans, according to Griesbach, there are throughout only five very unimportant corrections; and according to Scholz, only three. In the seven thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine verses of the New Testament, there scarcely exist ten or twelve in which corrections, introduced by Griesbach and Scholz, have any weight; and these, for the greater part, do not extend beyond the difference of a single word, or of a single letter. It may be admitted, that when there are two different readings, one is the inspired word, and the other is not; but this is the extent to which uncertainty can go. In fact, at the close of the most laborious investigations of the most learned men, it is found that the sacred text is more pure than the most pious had ventured to hope, and that the alterations amount to nothing.

VI. Another objection to plenary verbal inspiration is founded on alleged errors in reasoning and in doctrine. As this objection has been advanced only by the Neologists of Germany, and the disciples of the modern Unitarian school—both of whom, in my humble opinion, aim a blow at the foundation on which Christianity rests—I shall pass it by with the expression of an ardent prayer, that all who hold such fatal error may be brought to the knowledge of the truth! May God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine

in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

VII. To the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration it has been further objected, that in the Scriptures, the same sacred writer records the same facts and speeches in different words; that such variations are of frequent occurrence in the narratives of different writers; and that their accounts are sometimes in appearance contradictory.

In reply to this objection, we remark that inspired language admits of great variety, just as the diction of an able and eloquent man admits of great variety of phrases. In consistency with the most perfect accuracy of language, we maintain that the Spirit of God can convey the same divine truths in various ways. There is no contradiction though there is variety.

Thus we read, (Mark xvi. 5,) that the women who went early to the sepulchre "saw a young man sitting on the right side, who said to them, Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified: he is risen;" and Luke narrates, (chap. xxiv. 4,) that "two men stood by them, who said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." There is no contradiction here. The same circumstance is differently related. According to St. Luke, two men stood by the women; while St. Mark only alludes to him who had rolled away the stone, who was sitting alone on the right side of the sepulchre. In the same manner Moses, (Gen. xviii.) after speaking of three men as Abraham sat in the tent door in the plains of Mamre, immediately afterwards speaks of only one.

Another apparent contradiction occurs in relating the death of Judas. Matthew says that he went and hanged himself. (Matt. xxvii. 5.) Peter says, "that falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." (Acts i. 18.) This may be explained in the words of Professor Gaussen. "We well remember," says he, "that at Geneva, in a public conference, where we defended this very thesis, in conjunction with our beloved friend Professor Monod, he cited the analogous features of a suicide of which he had recently been all but an eyewitness. To make sure of accomplishing the dreadful deed, a wretched inhabitant of Lyons adopted the twofold means of seating himself outside a window, on the fourth floor of his residence, and of firing a pistol into his mouth. The same narrator of this desperate act might give three different

versions of it, and all three accurate. In the first, he might have described the entire occurrence; in the second, he could say that he terminated his existence by blowing out his brains; and in the third, that he precipitated himself from an upper story upon the pavement, and was killed."

Without entering on the examination of details, I may observe that nothing is more natural than that the same narrator, when relating the same event on several occasions, should use different phraseology? Might we not therefore expect variety in the narratives of the four evangelists? It is a remarkable characteristic of the sacred writers, that they discover no anxiety to guard against seeming inconsistencies, either with themselves or with one another. In works of imposture, especially where a number of persons are concerned, there is need of great care and caution, lest one part should contradict another; and such caution is easily perceived. But the sacred writers appear to have had no such concern about them. Conscious that all they wrote was true, they left it to prove its own consistency. Their productions possess consistency; but it was not a studied one, nor always apparent at first sight: it is that consistency which is certain to accompany truth.\*

VIII. It is further objected to a plenary verbal inspiration, that the Scriptures countenance errors opposed to the system of the universe, and the established laws of nature. The sacred writers speak of the foundations of the earth, and of the rising and setting of the sun, and use various expressions contrary to the admitted doctrine of the universe. The sun, at the command of Joshua, stood still over Gibeon in the midst of the heavens, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon. Can this be the language of the Creator of heaven and earth?

I deny that there are any errors in physical science to be found in Scripture. On the contrary, its statements, when narrowly examined, are found to be in strict accordance with the most advanced discoveries in science.

The miracle of Joshua alluded to has often been assailed with no ordinary arrogance. Passing by all discussion of the our means by which this miracle was accomplished, let us direct attention to the fact as recorded, (Josh. chap. x.) It is said, "The sun stood still in the midst of heaven; and there was no day like that before it, or after it." In regard to this fact, it has been said, "The most hardy religionist would be constrained to acknowledge, that, in the system of our globe, if the sun

\* Gospel its own Witness, Part II. chap. iii. p. 161.



were to stop but one moment, or if the movement of the earth were to slacken, warring armies, and all else on the surface of the earth, would be swept away like chaff before the tempest."

I observe, generally, that God speaks in the Bible as a learned astronomer would speak to his children. He would never tell them anything but what was true, and his language necessarily would often indicate a higher degree of knowledge than he communicated. In the miracle under consideration, when the course of the sun is arrested—that is to say, the earth's rotation, in the days of Joshua—the moon also is stayed, in the same proportion and by the same cause; a precaution which, as has been observed, no astronomer ignorant of our diurnal motion could have imagined; since, after all that has been said, this miracle involves nothing more than the prolongation of the day. How this was accomplished I know not; if this took place by brief and successive retardations of the rotatory motion of the earth, then the inhabitants of the world would no more feel what was going on than the railroad travellers when stopping at the assigned stations.

The Bible speaks to us concerning the phenomena of nature in the same way in which we speak to one another in our social relations. Sir Isaac Newton, and Sir John Herschel, would speak in regard to the heavenly bodies in the ordinary language of mankind. In short, "every new triumph which the mind of man achieves in the field of discovery binds us more firmly to our Bible; and by the very proportion in which philosophy multiplies the wonders of God do we prize that Book, on which the evidence of history has stamped the character of his authentic communication."\*

IX. It is alleged that the sacred writers, in some instances, disclaim inspiration, or express doubts of their possessing it. For example, in 1 Cor. vii. 6, Paul, in answer to a question about marriage, says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." The supposition that the apostle by these words disclaims inspiration is utterly unfounded. His meaning is, that marriage is allowed or permitted by the divine authority, and not enjoined as an indispensable duty. A similar mode of expression occurs, 2 Cor. viii. 8. And at the tenth verse of this same chapter, he says, "Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord;" that is, he had no new commandment to give in regard to the particular point on which

\* Chalmers on Christianity.

he was now addressing them, inasmuch as the Lord had personally delivered such commandment, (Matt. v. 31.) "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord:" that is, there was no commandment given by the Lord in respect to this matter, to which he could refer them; and therefore he, as his inspired servant, delivered to them the will of God. In the same way we are to understand the words, "Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." The words with which this chapter ends—"I think also that I have the Spirit of God," express strong assurance and not doubt. When the apostle says, (2 Cor. xi. 17,) "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly in this confidence of boasting," he refers not to the authority, but to the example of the Lord.

In like manner, it has been alleged that the apostle could not be inspired when, in the following words, he expressed his ignorance of the way in which the miracle to which he refers was performed: "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth." (2 Cor. xii.) The answer to this is, that God in revealing his counsel to us has made use of the personality of the sacred writers; and that in the present case, it was the will of God that Paul should be ignorant, and inform us of his ignorance.

Luke's introduction to his narrative, when he refers to information supplied by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, has been objected to by the opponents of plenary inspiration.

In answer to this, we fully admit that the sacred writers sometimes refer to their own opportunities of witnessing the facts and hearing the speeches they record, or to authentic information they received concerning them. (John xix. 35, xx. 30, 31; xxi. 24, 25.) It was necessary that the facts respecting our Lord's ministry, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension to glory, on which the truth of Christianity rests, should be attested by human as well as by divine testimony. This was necessary for the conviction of the unbeliever and the establishment of the believer, whose faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. The disciples of Jesus, therefore, who had an accurate knowledge of these things from their own observation, had a peculiar fitness for being employed by the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of inspi-

ration, for furnishing the church with a divine and infallible record of these things; seeing they could combine his testimony, which was divine and supernatural, and of which they were only the organs, with their own testimony, founded on their personal observation, and thus act up to the injunction of their Lord and Master: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from my Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John xv. 26, 27.)

The doctrine of plenary inspiration, therefore, does not suppose that the prior knowledge, which inspired men had from other sources of the things about which they spoke and wrote under divine suggestion, was either suppressed, or rendered of no further use to them as witnesses for the truth. All that is supposed is, that, speaking or writing as inspired teachers, they were not left to proceed on their previous acquaintance with these things, but were furnished by divine suggestion, both as to matter and words, in giving an infallible rule of faith to the church.\*

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## CHAPTER VIII.

PLENARY INSPIRATION ADMITTED ON CONDITION OF ONE OF THREE SYSTEMS OF EXCEPTIONS BEING TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

To these three systems of exceptions, one or other of which is contended for by some writers on inspiration, we shall now direct our attention.

I. It is admitted by them that the subject-matter of Scripture has been given by God; all the sentiments were undoubtedly inspired; but the language is human, insomuch that the sacred writers were left to themselves as regards expressions. Maintaining that the apostles were under the infallible direction of the Holy Spirit, as to every religious sentiment contained in their writings, secures, it is alleged, the same advantages as would result from supposing that every word and letter was dictated to them by his influences, without being liable to those objections which might be made against that view of the subject. "It appears never to have been the plan of the infinitely wise God to deviate by a miracle

\* Stevenson on the Offices of Christ, p. 55.

from the order of nature and providence by himself established, except that order was inadequate to the purpose. He who was about to raise Lazarus, commanded the stone to be rolled away by human strength, because for that a miracle was not necessary. Whenever, then, the ordinary habit and command of language, possessed by Peter, John, Paul, or any other, was sufficient for the purpose of clearly and accurately making known the mind of the Spirit, that ordinary faculty would most probably be employed.”\*

To this theory I have already adverted. In answering or refuting it, it is only necessary that I should observe,

First, That it is contrary to the testimony of Scripture. (1 Cor. ii. 13; Rom. iii. 2; Acts vii. 38; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) Secondly, it is a gratuitous and unwarrantable assumption. Thirdly, it is unphilosophical. Every one acquainted with the operations of the human mind is aware of the intimate connexion which exists between thoughts and words, between an idea, and its exact expression in language. Hence the difficulty which well-informed men sometimes feel in accurately giving expression to their thoughts. Is not this difficulty implied in the advice which Lord Mansfield gave to the gentleman who was appointed to the office of judge in the colonies? “When you can give your judgment, never give the reasons on which it is founded; for the judgment may be right when the reasons are wrong.” Fourthly, This theory, which is supposed to remove difficulties, is useless for the purpose for which it is propounded. I cannot perceive how those who admit that God suggested the thoughts contained in Scripture, remove, or even diminish any difficulty, by supposing that he gave not the expression of those thoughts. And, Fifthly, The theory is inconsistent with the views of those who hold it; for they are obliged to admit, that by far the greater proportion of Scripture has been given, even as to words, by the inspiration of God. Why not allow, then, that “all Scripture” has been so given? If all that is written, *τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα*, has been divinely inspired, then we are not at liberty to set aside this express testimony of God by supposing that, in many cases, the sacred writers were left to themselves in the choice of words. If God ascribes to the highest agency all that is written in the Bible, this is not to be denied on the plea that there was no necessity for it.

\* Smith’s Scripture Testimony, vol. i. p. 92.



II. There are writers who maintain that the historical books in particular are to be excepted from plenary inspiration. For the narration of facts well known to them, it is alleged that there was no need of the supernatural aid of the Spirit of inspiration. Was it not sufficient that the writer should have a good memory for the things he had seen, and have been careful in transcribing the ancient records?

Those who have adopted this view, require to be made acquainted with the peculiar and elevated designs of sacred history. On the nature of these designs I cannot enlarge in this place. But I must observe, that sacred history was intended to illustrate the holiness, the justice, the sovereignty, the wisdom and goodness of God; to evince the depravity of fallen human nature; and, more especially, to unveil the progressive discovery of the plan of redeeming mercy. The persons whose lives are narrated, and the events recorded, had, in general, a designed reference to the Messiah and the concerns of his kingdom; and the lives of Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, and others, were intended to prefigure important particulars in the character and history of Christ. I need only refer to the following passages in order to show that the sacred history was intended to exhibit patterns to allure us, and examples to admonish us. (Rom. xv. 4—11; 1 Cor. x. 5—10; Heb. iii. iv. vi.; James v. 10, 11; 1 Pet. i. 10—12; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 John iii. 11, 12; Jude 6—15; Rev. ii. 14.)

But if the writers of the sacred history in the Old Testament required the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, much more was this necessary for the evangelists and the writers of the New Testament. "Plato might feel himself at liberty to feign many things of his master Socrates, because it mattered little to the world whether the instruction that was conveyed proceeded from the one philosopher or the other. But the servants of a divine teacher, who appeared as his witnesses, and professed to be the historians of his life, were bound by their office to give a true record. Their history was an imposition on the world, if they did not declare exactly and literally what they had seen and heard. To relate, however, at the distance of twenty years, long moral discourses, which were not originally written; to preserve a variety of parables, the beauty and significancy of which depended upon particular expressions; to record long and minute prophecies, where the alteration of a single phrase might have produced an inconsistency

between the event and the prediction—all this is a work so very much above the capacity of unlearned men, that, had they attempted to execute it by their own natural powers, they must have fallen into such absurdities and contradictions as would have betrayed them to every discerning eye.” \*

Hence the necessity of divine inspiration to the writers of the historical narratives contained in Scripture. It was not enough that they should be preserved from error; it was necessary, that, as the organs through which the world was in all ages to be instructed, they should be guided into the truth, and not only truth in general, but the truth which they were to record. How could they, without inspiration in its fullest extent, both as to matter and diction, write narratives full of types prospectively referring to the future—and narratives, too, that were subservient to, and in entire accordance with, the doctrines of divine revelation? How could they, without plenary inspiration, write historical narratives in which the Anointed One was prefigured by many undesigned circumstances, the typical reference of which was unknown to the writer himself? How could they, without such supernatural aid, describe, in the just proportion of God’s estimate, scenes which were typically to represent the work of redemption, or the character of the last times?

We are not at liberty to institute comparisons; but this much we may say, when we consider the nature and designs of the narratives contained in the Bible, that if all Scripture is divinely inspired, the historical books are preeminently so.

What, then, it is asked, are we to believe that the letter of the heathen Lysias, or the address of Gamaliel, or the speeches of Job’s friends, or the words of Lamech, Rabshakeh, or Satan, have been inspired? Certainly not; but they have been inserted by God in the book which is his; he is throughout the Historian; though he is not the author of the words referred to, it is he who has recorded them; and they have been placed there by him for the instruction of mankind.

III. There is a third class of passages in Scripture which, on account of their apparent insignificance, certain theorists would except from inspiration. Would the Holy Spirit, it is asked, dictate to Paul the common salutations with which he concludes his Epistles? or the counsel he has given to Timothy respecting his health? or the directions he gave

\* Hill’s Lectures, vol. i. p. 311.

him concerning his parchments, and the cloak he had left at Troas with Carpus, when he quitted Asia?

In excepting such passages as these from inspiration, the dangerous principle is assumed, that we are at liberty to select from a book, all of which, it is affirmed, has been given by inspiration of God, those passages which we may think relate to matters either too unimportant or too well known to the writers to admit of their having been thus communicated. Such conduct would be culpable, even if we had been unable to ascertain the purposes for which they have been inserted in the sacred volume; but with regard to the passages in question, we can perceive some valuable ends which their insertion in the Scriptures was intended to serve. To point out these does not come within my present design. I shall only make a few observations.

I repeat the assertion, that, with regard to the passages in question, we can perceive some valuable ends which their insertion in Scripture was intended to serve. To this, it has been replied by some of those who would except such passages from inspiration, "Those well-meaning persons who think that they have proved the divine inspiration of a particular sentence, (such as 1 Tim. v. 23, or 2 Tim. iv. 13,) because their pious fertility has been able to educe a great number of very important religious reflections from the advice, request, the motives, or the implied circumstances in the case, are committing an egregious fallacy, the *non causa pro causa*. Let them put forth the same efforts upon hundreds of sentences in the Apocrypha, or even in the Greek and Roman poets, and they will bring forth volumes of excellent moral and spiritual observations."\*

To this we reply, that we do not rest the argument for the full inspiration of such passages upon the number of very important religious reflections we can educe from them, but upon the same grounds on which we prove the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. They are found in the book of God, and we hold that God is their Author, not less than he is the Author of any other sentence in Scriptures. No; we will not give up a single sentence of it. In the hour of darkness and distress, it has been a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path; our support in trials, and in temptations our sword and our shield. Could our confidence in its divine inspiration be

\* Smith's Scrip. Testimony, vol. i. p. 93.

in the slightest degree shaken, we feel that our every hope is gone; and we repeat, that we will not yield up a single sentence of it, though it should be a sentence of which we can neither see the meaning, nor comprehend the use. But reasoning in this case, in the same way that we do with regard to every other department of the works and ways of God, we will bend before the throne of the All-Wise, and, deprecating alike the presumption and the curse of the man who adds to, or takes from the word of God, our prayer shall be, "What I know not, teach thou me."

But though we do not rest the argument for the inspiration of the passages in question on the number of pious reflections we can educe from them, we do not deem it irrelevant, when we are told by our opponents of their apparent insignificance, to show that their insertion in the sacred volume answers purposes worthy of the wisdom and benevolence of God.

Is the inspiration of the passage in which Paul, from his dungeon at Rome, requests Timothy to come to him before winter, and to bring with him a cloak which he had left with Carpus at Troas, objected to on account of its insignificance? On the same ground, the words in which our Lord refers to his enemies parting his garments among them, and casting lots upon his vesture, (Ps. xxii. 18; Matt. xxvii. 35,) may be objected to. What were the circumstances of Paul when he sent his request to Timothy? He had been for upwards of thirty years in the service of Christ; in labours abundant, in stripes above measure, and in prisons frequent. He is now Paul the aged, at Rome, expecting martyrdom. On his first appearance before the tribunal, all men forsook him: "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." (2 Tim. iv. 16—18.) It was when this ambassador of Christ was in prison at Rome, suffering from cold and lack of raiment, that he sent his request to Timothy respecting a cloak which had been left at Troas. Who would wish such a passage as this, so touching and full of meaning, omitted from the New Testament? "If the place which this passage occupies in the epistle, and in the solemn farewell of St. Paul to the disciples, be considered, it presents the apostle to our view in



the situation of all others the most calculated to awaken the feelings. He has just been arraigned before the emperor; he is about to finish his days as a martyr; the hour of his departure is at hand; and the crown of righteousness is laid up for him. Behold him on the confines of two worlds; looking at this he is about to leave, doomed to be beheaded by the order of Nero; and to that which he is hastening to possess, crowned as a righteous man by the King of kings and Lord of lords; in this, forsaken by men—in that, welcomed by angels; in this, wanting a worthless cloak for a covering—in that, covered with the righteousness of saints, clothed upon with his heavenly mansion of light and joy, and every vestige of mortality swallowed up of life.”\*

I feel almost ashamed at myself for defending the plenary inspiration of a single sentence contained in the canon of God’s oracles, and forming a part of that Scripture which cannot be broken. I shall therefore not expatiate on the counsel of Paul to Timothy respecting his health, further than to observe, that we learn from it this very important truth, that the apostle who was possessed of miraculous gifts, and who so often healed the sick, and even raised the dead, had not the power of restoring his beloved disciple to full health.

With respect to the salutations at the end of the epistles, they are indicative at once of the love of God our Saviour, and of the benevolence of Christian men. They were divinely intended to answer numerous and important purposes, which it is out of my province here to notice.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### POPULAR OBJECTIONS TO THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY.

I MIGHT pass by these objections as undeserving of serious attention; but as they have influence with the uninformed, I shall briefly notice them.

I. Christianity is friendly to despotism, and the enemy of liberty. No sentiment can be more unfounded. While the New Testament declares that civil government is an ordinance of God, it declares that the rulers “are not to be a terror to good works, but to the evil. Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God

\* Haldane on Inspiration.

to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he beareth not the sword in vain : for he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Thus, the foundation of civil government is laid in justice.

On the other hand, the people are commanded to render obedience to lawful authority. As government is the ordinance of God, an ordinance which is necessary, reasonable, and beneficial, and designed for the good of the governed, all are bound to be subject to it, not from fear of punishment, but for conscience sake.

The religion of Christ tells princes and rulers that they must be just, and rule in the fear of God. It proclaims to those who occupy the seat of judgment, "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment. Defend the poor and the fatherless : do justice to the afflicted and needy." To the whole people it says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of men for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (Rom. xiii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13—15.) Thus doth Christianity address every class of men, and exhort them in their several stations and relations to do justly and to love mercy.

It were easy to show, that Christianity has been the great source of civilization and of civil and religious liberty. In fact, that which is known in this country under the name of civil and religious liberty was unknown to the most refined nations of antiquity. It is the product of the pure and benevolent principles of Christianity operating in the hearts of men, and leading them to regard each other as brethren.

II. Christianity, not less than other religions, is friendly to priestcraft. On the contrary, the New Testament, while it authorizes the appointment of teachers and ministers, who will give themselves wholly to their work, does not give countenance to a separate caste, whose sympathies and interests are foreign to those of the Christian people. It requires the minister of Christ to be "blameless, sober, of good behaviour, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, not given to filthy lucre ; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, just, holy, temperate ; he must not strive, but be gentle unto

all men ; apt to teach, patient ; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." (1 Tim. iii. ; Tit. i. ; 2 Tim. ii.)

It lays down positions respecting the maintenance of the ministers of religion, the equitableness of which is incontrovertible. "The workman is worthy of his hire. They that serve at the altar should live by the altar. When they dispense to others of their spiritual things, they should in return receive of their worldly things." Is there anything unreasonable in this ? Is it not equitable, just, and absolutely necessary ?

As to the lordly power assumed by the priesthood under the name of the Christian religion, and the spiritual despotism which they have exercised, the New Testament denounces it. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." (1 Pet. v. 2, 3.)

III. There have been great cruelties practised, and bitter persecutions carried on, under the Christian name. Let the perpetrators of such cruelties be condemned with the utmost severity. They are not chargeable on Christianity ; in which we are commanded to "love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us." (Matt. v. 44.) Multitudes who are called Christians are only so in name ; their conduct is denounced by that religion which they profess ; and, therefore, it is unjust to charge Christianity with what, in place of sanctioning, it loudly condemns.

If even those who are the sincere followers of Christ, through mistaken views of duty, have inflicted any injury on their fellow-creatures, because they differed in opinion from them, our Lord rebukes them as he did the three disciples when they wished him to bring down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans : "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of ; the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

IV. The partial promulgation of Christianity is another objection which some are prone to urge. To this it may be replied, that the objection applies as much to natural religion as to revealed ; for the doctrines of the former are not recognised by multitudes of mankind ; they are ignorant of them. It applies also to the blessings of providence. Some nations

enjoy benefits that are not within the reach of others; and some individuals possess higher mental endowments, and means of improvement, than others. Consider, also, that when Christianity was first revealed, its promulgation was entrusted to the disciples of Jesus. That they have in some instances neglected their duty cannot be denied, and must be deplored.

There is this, however, to be said in their defence, that their efforts to circulate the Scriptures, and promulgate the gospel, have often been violently opposed; and that but for persecution from the rulers of the world, it would probably have been diffused over the globe. "If a conqueror, followed by his powerful army, desolate a country, and burn the cities and villages, and destroy the cattle and the fields of corn, and the people perish with cold and hunger, is their misery to be ascribed to a lack of goodness in God, or to the superabounding wickedness of man? The answer will equally apply to the subject before us. The objection will appear still less cogent, if it be considered that Christianity is not the religion of a day, nor of an age, but a scheme of mercy extending itself through thousands of years, which gradually attains its triumphs, and which, overcoming all opposition, will at last be diffused over the face of the whole earth. The tendency to this must be obvious to every friend of divine truth who is an attentive observer of the moral state of mankind. When the gospel has produced its full effect, the objection will entirely cease; for, according to the language of prophecy, 'Men shall be blessed in Jesus, and all nations shall call him blessed.' (Ps. lxxii. 17.)"\*

V. But it is further objected, that there are many divisions and great dissensions among Christians. I admit the fact, but deny the conclusion intended to be deduced from it. The pure and heavenly nature of Christianity, and the impure and corrupt condition of human nature, are the occasion of divisions. But differences and dissensions are to be found among the non-Christian portion of mankind as well as the Christian; among idolaters, Mahommedans, and deists; but neither the Mahommedan nor the deist considers these as reasons for his rejecting his religious belief. From causes operating in human nature, considerable diversities of opinion exist in medicine, law, politics, and philosophy; medicine, law, and philosophy,

\* Bogue's Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament.



however, are useful to mankind, and are so regarded. But why should the gospel be rejected because it is perverted or deformed, or the subject of quarrels, and made the occasion, by bad men, of displaying their party and bitter feelings? The person who should do so has been likened to him who should cut down a tree bearing abundance of delicious fruit, and furnishing a refreshing shade, because caterpillars disfigured the leaves, and spiders made their webs among the branches.\*

I might mention several other common objections against the gospel, but I forbear. Objections may be offered to all the works of God in creation and providence. It may be asked, What is the use of the vast sandy deserts of Arabia and Libya? what good end can be answered by the pestilential winds which blow certain death over them to the traveller? what benefit can be derived from devouring earthquakes? Where is the wisdom or the goodness observable in these? If there were an all-wise and benevolent Being who governed the world, would he allow such acts of horrid wickedness, falsehood, robbery, and crime? Notwithstanding the difficulties in creation and providence, you cannot resist the evidence which constrains you to acknowledge God as the Creator and Governor of the world. But the objections against Christianity are neither so strong nor so difficult to be answered as the difficulties in creation and providence. God has proved by evidence, varied, full, and most appropriate, that the revelation contained in the Bible is a revelation immediately from himself. And if, in consequence of the nature of the subject-matter, and also the limited nature of our faculties, there are some things above our comprehension, it becomes us with all humility of mind to *trust* him who is faithful and true, and to be assured that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. This much is certain, that those who reject Christianity on account of its mysteries, ought, in consistency, to renounce the first and fundamental truths of natural religion—ought at once to renounce the name of philosophers.

It has often been observed, that if there were nothing in Christianity above the comprehension of man, that is, if it were altogether without mysteries, it would not be like the works of God. It is also a fact, deserving of particular attention, that the mysteries which appear most above reason, are closely

\* Bogue's Essay.

connected with the truths of which reason is convinced. The mysterious doctrine of the Trinity is necessarily connected with the work of redemption; the work of redemption is connected with the necessity of satisfying divine justice; the necessity of satisfaction is connected with the doctrine of the corruption of human nature; and the corruption of human nature is a fact which all history and universal experience attest.

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## CHAPTER X.

### ON THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD.

FROM the various evidences adduced to prove the plenary inspiration of the holy Scriptures, we are entitled to conclude that the word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is possessed of supreme and decisive authority. It is God himself who speaks throughout; and, therefore, it becomes us to hear with all docility and humbleness of mind. A privilege is thus conferred, and an obligation imposed.

I. A privilege is conferred. What greater blessing can man enjoy than to have all uncertainty removed concerning those great truths which regard his immortal interests? In the book of God, completely and verbally inspired throughout, he has a sure and immovable foundation for his faith and hope. It is the special gift of him who is the Source of all intelligence, and in whose hands are the destinies of all men. Let us receive it, then, "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in them that believe."\*

In the Scriptures, we have the only authoritative standard of the will of God. With the most perfect confidence, therefore, we may be assured, that whatever claims may have been advanced to inspiration since the close of the canon of Scripture, they have been false and enthusiastical pretences. Here we have the only supreme and authoritative rule to which we can appeal; and all other authority in matters of faith we regard as fallible. Though false prophets and prophetesses should put forth pretensions, we are neither disturbed nor deceived, because God himself has forewarned us of such temptations. (Deut. xii. 1—4; Jer. xxiii. 25—32; Matt. vii. 15; xxiv.

\* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

11, 24; Acts xx. 29; 2 Thess. ii. 7—12; 1 Tim. iii. 1—3; 2 Tim. iii. 8—12; 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2; 1 John ii. 18; iv. 1—3.) In his word, and in that alone, to the exclusion of everything else, we have infallible certainty. Each one, therefore, as he presses the Bible to his bosom, may say, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled." \*

As the infallible rule, and the only infallible rule, the Scriptures are of unspeakable value to man. They make known to him, with absolute certainty, the way in which he can become just with God, (Rom. iii. 21 to end,) the way in which he can be delivered from sin, and restored to the favour and the friendship of God. (Heb. vii. 24 to end.) The way in which he can attain to present peace and final happiness, is here made known to him as by an audible voice from heaven. Here also the law is clearly unfolded, which is holy and just and good, the law which commands us to perform, and in the most perfect manner, all the duties of piety to God, and of righteousness and benevolence to man. Here God speaks to us, and requires us to do "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise."

What more would we ask to solve our doubts, to remove our fears, to sustain us in hours of darkness and distress, and to cheer us amid trials and difficulties, than the promises of Jehovah, the God of salvation, assuring us of his own gracious presence to console us, and of strength from above suited to our day? What greater encouragement could we desire to undertake whatever he prescribes, and to enter on the discharge of whatever he enjoins, than his word, declaring that he will make us sufficient for duty, and that by our very weakness he will be glorified? Could the person who, with fear and trembling, is asking "what he must do to be saved," hear the voice of God, the Judge of all, directing him to Him who is mighty to save, who is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto God by him, would not his anxieties give place to peace and joy in believing? Could the believer, who is in heaviness through the manifold sorrows of life, hear his

heavenly Father say unto him, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," would he not cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God, and respond, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy of being compared with that eternal weight of glory which awaits me"? Or could the disciple who is entering the valley of the shadow of death, hear the voice of him that sits upon the throne, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death;" would he not reply, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me."

If man, in these supposed situations, and in all the circumstances in which he can be placed, would be satisfied, were he to hear the voice of God utter the promise, and administer the consolation, why should he not feel the same satisfaction, when all the promises he requires, and far more than he could ask, are recorded by God himself in his word? They have been recorded there by him whose truth and faithfulness are stable as the mountains, and one jot or tittle of whose word shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.

II. The supreme and unquestionable authority of the word of God imposes an obligation.

1. To search the Scriptures, and to inquire into their meaning, with the humility which becomes us as creatures whose faculties are so limited, and with the reverence due to the oracles of the only wise God. "If ever in reading Scripture," observes Origen, "thou encounterest an idea which becomes to thee a stone of stumbling, or a rock of offence, accuse only thyself; doubt not that this stone of stumbling and rock of offence has an important meaning, and concerning it must the promise be accomplished, 'Whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed.' (Rom. ix. 33.) Begin then by believing, and thou shalt find under this imaginary offence an abundant and hallowed utility. If we have received commandment not to utter vain words, because we shall give account at the last day, how assured should we feel that every word that has proceeded from God (and every word in Scripture has proceeded from him) has some important end to accomplish! As among plants,



there is not one without its peculiar virtue; and as it is those only who have a knowledge of botanical science that can tell to what useful purpose each may be applied; so it is that whoever is a holy and spiritual botanist of the word of God, he it is who, by gathering up each atom and element, will find the virtue of that word, and acknowledge that there is nothing in all that is written that is superfluous.\*

In inquiring into the oracles of God, let us remember the declared opposition of the natural man to the things of the Spirit of God; and let our prayer ever be, "Lead us in thy truth, and teach us." We may thus hope that the gospel will become to us the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation.

2. Read the Bible, and rest not satisfied with inquiring into all its evidences. The best authors on Christian evidence ought to be read; but as the Scripture is its own witness, it only can bring spiritual light, and life, and health. Read the Bible; and it will do more to prove to you its divine authority than the most eloquent demonstrations. Read the Bible; and hear God speak to you throughout, and you will experience its powerful efficacy in discerning the thoughts and affections of the heart, and sharper than any two-edged sword; you will be surprised by its beauties, its grandeur, its divine adaptations.\* A single verse has been to myriads the commencement of a new existence. "The just shall live by faith," were the words which conveyed heavenly light to the mind of Luther. "Creative word both for the reformer and the Reformation! It was by it that God then said, 'Let there be light, and there was light.'" In opening the Scriptures, let it be your prayer, "Sanctify me by thy truth; thy word is truth."

3. The supreme authority of the word of God imposes awful responsibility upon those to whom it is committed. This responsibility cannot be disposed of, even though you should, after all the evidences of its heavenly origin that have been adduced, reject Christianity; for, in rejecting it, you have to consider that you fall under the doom of those who wilfully reject the Saviour of the lost. Learn that doom from the following passages:—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) "He that believeth on the Son of God

\* Rom. xxxix. in Jer. xlv. 22.

hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 7—10.)

On the supposition of the divine authority of the word of God, is not the doom pronounced on all who reject the Saviour of sinners reasonable and just? That word which we have proved to have come from God has declared, that God has so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. To reject this unspeakable gift must involve the highest degree of disobedience, ingratitude, and contempt, and, therefore, must be the greatest of all sins. It is a refusal of the only way of obtaining forgiveness of sins—the only way in which peace with God and eternal life may be enjoyed; and, therefore, it is a sin of peculiar atrocity and magnitude.

But even though you may be convinced by external evidences that Jesus is the Christ, you are to guard against the supposition that a mere profession of Christianity is sufficient. The design of Christianity is to effect a change on the soul—to create the whole man anew in Christ Jesus—and to mould the character by its heavenly influence. It is God alone who can effect this. "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." (John iv. 44.) This is the doctrine of that sacred volume, the divine authority and plenary inspiration of which we have established—a doctrine which is intended to lead those who are convinced of their guilt and helplessness to fall down before God, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner. Send forth thy light and thy truth, and let them lead me and guide me. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

When you receive the Saviour, the only way in which spiritual life can be maintained is, by living by the faith of the Son of God. It will be the great business of your life to glorify God by your spirit and your body, which are God's. And when death comes, which unbelievers so greatly dread, you will regard it as the messenger of your Father in heaven,

to convey you to the presence of God and of the Lamb, and to the society of the redeemed. Your bodies afterwards, raised from the graves, shall be united to your immortal souls; and you will hear the joyful welcome from him that sitteth upon the throne, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Blessed consummation! "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; the former things having passed away."

4. The supreme authority of the Scriptures imposes the duty of cherishing the deepest veneration for the word of God. To reverence the words of the Most High is often noticed as the characteristic of those who truly fear God. "To this man will I look," says the Lord, "even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." This holy veneration for the words of God will show its influence on the disposition of him who cherishes it, whatever be his office in the church, or his business in the world. All his references to Scripture, whether in speech or in writing, will be expressed with unfeigned veneration.

It is not enough that the Bible be acknowledged as the only authentic source of information respecting the details of that moral economy, which the Supreme Being has instituted for the government of the intelligent beings who occupy this globe. Its authenticity must be something more than acknowledged. It must be felt, and in act and obedience submitted to. Let us put them to the test. "Verily I say unto you," says our Saviour, "unless a man be born again, he shall not enter into the kingdom of God." "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has sent forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." We need not multiply quotations; but if there be any repugnance to the obvious truths which we have announced to the reader in the language of the Bible, his mind is not yet tutored to the philosophy of the subject. "It may be in the way, but the final result is not yet arrived at. It is still a slave to the elegance and plausibility of its old specula-

tions ; and though it admits the principle, that every previous opinion must give way to the supreme authority of an actual communication from God, it wants consistency and hardihood to carry the principle into accomplishment."—CHALMERS.

THE END.



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